

**INCLUSION OF CHILDREN WITH DIVERSE NEEDS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD
EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES: EXPLORING INCLUSIVE PRACTICE THROUGH
SELF-AUTHORSHIP**

Troy Dunn

Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood)

Supervisors:

Professor Susan Walker

Professor Joanne Lunn

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Education (Research)

Office of Education Research
Faculty of Education
Queensland University of Technology
February 2017

Keywords

Diverse needs, early childhood education and care, evaluativism, inclusion, interpretivist paradigm, objectivism, pedagogies, personal epistemology, self-authorship, subjectivism

Abstract

The inclusion of children with diverse needs in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services is now recognised internationally and within the Australian context as best practice and a crucial feature of providing high quality education and care (Kalyanpur, 2011; Mohay & Reid, 2006). As such, competent early childhood educators are essential to support the inclusion of children with diverse needs, while also facilitating high quality inclusive pedagogical practice. Through the theoretical framework of self-authorship this multiple case study design explored how three early childhood educators working in a long day ECEC setting made meaning of their experiences with the inclusion of children with diverse needs. The multiple case study design used semi-structured interviews and observations as data collection tools to explore the meaning making of the selected participants. Self-authorship provided a theoretical lens to unpack the meaning making process used by early childhood educators working in an inclusive ECEC service. Self-authored individuals have the capacity to evaluate others' perspectives (personal epistemology dimension), develop healthy social relationships (interpersonal dimension), and are able to construct an internally defined sense of self (intrapersonal dimension) (Baxter Magolda, 1998).

While the ECEC inclusion of children with diverse needs is well researched, there has been no research to date, which has used self-authorship theory to explore meaning making in the context of ECEC inclusion. This framework allowed for a comprehensive exploration of how early childhood educators make meaning of experiences with inclusion of children with diverse needs and how this related to their pedagogy.

The nature of the participants' self-authorship development was investigated through the following research question:

How do ECEC educators make meaning of their experiences with the inclusion of children with diverse needs in their setting?

There were two main findings in this study. The first was that a potential relationship existed between each participant's identified phase of self-authorship (either *following external formulas, the crossroads, or self-authored*) and the extent to which they critically reflected on pedagogy for inclusion. The second finding to emerge was that a relationship existed between self-authorship and the participants' beliefs about the enactment of inclusive practices.

This research project, using the theoretical framework of self-authorship, has made a unique contribution to research regarding ECEC inclusion of children with diverse needs and suggests that self-authorship can help develop, enhance, and sustain high quality inclusive teaching practices for educators. The findings of this study suggest that the successful inclusion for children with diverse needs within ECEC settings can be related to educators' meaning making process, their personal epistemology and the capacity to be able to critically reflect on others' perspectives, and their interpersonal and intrapersonal development.

Table of Contents

Keywords.....	i
Abstract	i
Table of Contents.....	iii
List of Figures.....	vii
List of Tables.....	viii
List of Abbreviations	ix
Statement of Original Authorship.....	i
Acknowledgements.....	i
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	2
<i>Inclusion in ECEC: International Perspective.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Inclusion in ECEC: Australian Perspective.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Theoretical Framework of Self-authorship.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Critical Reflection in ECEC.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Research Aim and Research Question</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Overview of Methodology</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Significance of this Study</i>	<i>13</i>
Chapter Summary	14
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	16
<i>Introduction.....</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>Defining ECEC Inclusion.....</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>The Role of Inclusion in Enhancing Children’s Developmental Outcomes</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>Challenges to Successful ECEC Inclusion</i>	<i>26</i>
Knowledge about inclusive practices.....	27
Educators’ beliefs about inclusion.	29
<i>ECEC Inclusive Pedagogies.....</i>	<i>32</i>
Critical reflection in the context of inclusive pedagogies.	34
<i>The Theoretical Framework of Self-authorship</i>	<i>36</i>

Personal epistemology dimension.....	37
Interpersonal dimension.....	38
Intrapersonal dimension.....	38
<i>Self-authorship: The Three Meaning Making Phases</i>	<i>39</i>
Following external formulas.....	39
The crossroads.....	40
Self-authored.....	40
<i>Self-authorship: Personal Epistemology and Critical Reflection for Meaning Making.....</i>	<i>43</i>
<i>Personal Epistemology and Critical Reflection for Pedagogies</i>	<i>46</i>
Chapter Summary	49
Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework and Methodology	51
Introduction.....	51
Research Question.....	51
Research Paradigm	52
Multiple Case Study Design	54
Case Selection	56
Data Collection	58
Observations.....	59
Individual semi-structured interviews.....	60
Scenario interview.....	61
Self-authorship interview.....	61
Stimulated recall interview.....	63
Data Analysis	63
Ethical Issues.....	65
Validity.....	67
Triangulation.....	67
Member checking.....	67
Peer debriefing.....	68
Researcher reflexivity.....	68
Chapter Summary	68
Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Findings	70
Introduction.....	70
Setting the Scene.....	74

<i>Isabella's Meaning Making for Inclusion</i>	78
Personal epistemology dimension.....	79
Subjectivist personal epistemology.....	79
Objectivist personal epistemology.....	84
Interpersonal dimension.....	85
Families of children with diverse needs.....	85
Centre colleagues.....	87
Children with diverse needs.....	90
Intrapersonal dimension	94
Section Summary	98
<i>Jane's Meaning Making for Inclusion</i>	99
Personal epistemology dimension.....	101
Subjectivist personal epistemology.....	101
Emerging evaluativist personal epistemology.....	105
Interpersonal dimension.....	108
Families of children with diverse needs.....	108
Centre colleagues.....	111
Children with diverse needs.....	114
External early childhood professionals.....	116
Intrapersonal dimension.....	117
Section Summary	123
<i>Sophie's Meaning Making for Inclusion</i>	124
Personal epistemology dimension.....	125
Evaluativistic personal epistemology.....	125
Collaborative evaluativist personal epistemology.....	130
Subjectivist personal epistemology.....	131
Interpersonal dimension.....	132
Families of children with diverse needs.....	132
Centre colleagues.....	135
Children with diverse needs.....	138
Intrapersonal dimension.....	141
Section Summary	146
Chapter Summary	147
Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion	148
Introduction.....	148

<i>Meaning Making for Inclusion is Related to Self-authorship</i>	149
Isabella: following others and self.	149
Jane: at the crossroads but moving on.	153
Sophie: self-authored.	156
<i>Section Summary</i>	158
<i>Self-authorship and Beliefs about the Enactment of Inclusive Practices</i>	159
Isabella: direct instruction and keeping them safe.	159
Jane: individual differences and promoting safety.....	160
Sophie: capable learners and enhancing learning through behaviour guidance.	161
<i>Section Summary</i>	163
<i>Research Implications for ECEC Inclusion and Practice</i>	163
<i>Ensuring Trustworthiness of Findings</i>	165
<i>Future Research</i>	167
Conclusion.....	168
References	170
Appendices	187
<i>Appendix A: Participant Recruitment and Consent Information</i>	187
<i>Appendix B: Data Collection Tools</i>	199

List of Figures

<i>Figure 2.1.</i> Phases and dimensions of self-authorship.	41
---	----

List of Tables

Table 1 <i>Overview of Data Collected</i>	59
Table 2 <i>Characteristics of Self-Authorship and Meaning Making for Inclusion</i>	72

List of Abbreviations

Abbreviations	Meaning
ACECQA	Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
DDA	Disability Discrimination Act
DEC	Division for Early Childhood
DEEWR	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
ECA	Early Childhood Australia
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
ECIA	Early Childhood Intervention Australia
ECT	Early Childhood Teaching
EYLF	Early Years Learning Framework
ISP	Inclusion Support Programme
NAEYC	National Association for the Education of Young Children
NQF	National Quality Framework
NQS	National Quality Standard
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WNS	Wabash National Study

Statement of Original Authorship

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted to meet requirements for an award at this or any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Layla', written over a horizontal line.

Date: 23/02/2017

Acknowledgements

The completion of this thesis would not have been possible without the amazing support and guidance provided to me by from my supervisors, family, friends, and colleagues.

To my supervisors, Professor Susan Walker and Professor Joanne Lunn Brownlee. I will be always appreciative of your support and expertise.

To my wonderful and loving wife Kylie, I am extremely grateful for the support I have received from you. Thank you for being an inspiration to me and for constantly reminding me to stay focused, as well as making sure I still found time to have some fun. I could not have completed this without you.

To my family, especially my children, Christopher, Joshua, Stacey and Jayden, thank you for assisting me with maintaining some well-needed balance in my life and encouraging me as I completed this thesis.

To my friend and colleague Professor Deborah Harcourt, thank you for helping me believe in myself and encouraging me to engage in further study. Thank you also for the robust conversations and constant positive feedback that you provided me.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere thanks to the early childhood educators, the centre director, and the children and families of the early childhood education and care setting for this study. This thesis would not have been possible without you all.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The inclusion of children with diverse needs in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) is now widely viewed internationally and within the context of Australia as a key element of high quality education and care (Kalyanpur, 2011; Mohay & Reid, 2006). In this study the term *diverse needs* refers to children with developmental delays, physical disabilities, medical, cultural, and behavioural needs. The research in Australia on inclusion in ECEC settings proposes that children with diverse needs experience significant benefits in terms of social, cognitive, behavioural, and motor development when they are able to actively participate in quality ECEC settings and programs (Grace, Llewellyn, Wedgwood, Fenech & McConnell, 2008; Kemp, 2016). There is also ample evidence illustrating that language development can be enhanced when children with diverse needs engage in interactions with typically developing children (Webster & Forster, 2012). Research internationally also suggests that typically developing children benefit from inclusive ECEC settings. They are able to experience the true diversity of individuals, which can decrease the likelihood of future bias or harmful attitudes towards individuals' with diverse needs (Conrad & Brown, 2011; Purdue, 2009).

Although there is growing evidence emerging from research that highlights the importance and benefits of inclusion in ECEC settings, there are still significant barriers identified that may prevent high quality ECEC inclusion from being successfully enacted for children with diverse needs. According to Darrow (2009), these barriers can be summarised in three main domains: organisational; educator knowledge; and the attitudes of educators. Organisational barriers relate to the way in which the ECEC setting designs and implements inclusion for children with diverse needs, which includes the safety and resourcing of the learning environment (Buysse & Hollingsworth, 2009). Knowledge barriers address the

knowledge and skills that ECEC educators require to provide high quality ECEC inclusion. Lastly, attitudinal barriers refer to the beliefs that educators may have regarding ECEC inclusion of children with diverse needs (Darrow, 2009).

The beliefs that educators hold about ECEC inclusion have been a topic of investigation by a number of previous international and Australian researchers (Bruns & Mogharreban, 2007; Buell, Gamel-McCormick & Hallam, 1999; Petriwskyj, 2010). The results of these studies have emphasised that the beliefs that educators possess regarding the inclusion of children with diverse needs are vital in enhancing or hindering the quality of the ECEC program and experiences for such children, as well as typically developing children (Lindsay, 2007). As Bruns and Mogharreban (2007) highlighted, inclusive beliefs that view all children, regardless of diverse needs, as competent and capable learners are the first important step for ECEC educators in the provision of inclusive programs. Educators who hold strong and positive beliefs about ECEC inclusion are more likely to implement a program and practice that is individualised to meet the educational and developmental needs of children with diverse needs (Lindsay, 2007).

Additional research on beliefs points to the role of personal epistemological beliefs in determining inclusive teaching practice (Jordan, Schwartz & McGhie-Richmond, 2009). Personal epistemological beliefs are the beliefs individuals hold about the nature of knowledge and knowing (Berthelsen, Brownlee & Boulton-Lewis, 2002). A robust body of research related to personal epistemologies of educators has emerged over the last decade. This research highlights that educators' personal epistemologies are likely to influence and shape their pedagogical practice in the classroom context (Brownlee, Schraw & Berthelsen, 2011a, Brownlee et al., 2012; Pearrow & Sanchez, 2008). More recently, educators' personal epistemologies have been investigated using the theoretical framework of self-authorship

(Edwards, 2014; Hogan, 2013). Self-authorship refers to the development of an individuals' ability to analyse and make educated judgements (epistemological dimension) in the light of their independent social relationships (interpersonal dimension), and personal beliefs and values (intrapersonal dimension) (Edwards, 2014). This framework offers a holistic way to consider educators' personal epistemologies in the context of their identity and interpersonal relationships.

This study used self-authorship as a theoretical framework to explore ECEC educators' beliefs regarding the inclusion of children with diverse needs. Self-authorship provides a holistic way of promoting and understanding the construction of meaning making or ways of knowing (Meszaros, 2007). This framework was therefore a useful lens through which to examine ECEC educators' meaning making of their experiences with the inclusion of children with diverse needs. This introductory chapter will firstly provide background information on ECEC inclusion of children with diverse needs, focusing on international and Australian perspectives. It will then introduce the concepts of the theoretical framework of self-authorship and critical reflection. Next, it will define the research aims and the specific research question, followed by a brief description of the research methodology and the significance of the study. Finally, it will provide a chapter summary and deliver a detailed description of the remainder of the chapters presented in this thesis.

Inclusion in ECEC: International Perspective

Although the inclusion of children with diverse needs into ECEC services in most developed countries is now widely accepted, it is still a relatively new phenomenon in practice. ECEC is a term that is used internationally and covers all prior to formal schooling ECEC setting types including: centre based long day care, family day care, occasional care, preschool and outside of hours care (Early Childhood Australia, 2011). Before the early

1970s, it was unusual to find children with diverse needs in ECEC programs intended predominantly for typically developing children (Mulvihill, Shearer & Van Horn, 2002). However, the important work of Dunn (1968), an American researcher, positioned the inclusion of children with diverse needs into mainstream educational services at the forefront. Dunn highlighted to the public the injustice of segregated education for children with disabilities and argued that special classes provided inadequate education for children with disabilities. Dunn also advocated for a better education than special class placements for socioculturally disadvantaged children with minor learning difficulties who had been labeled mentally delayed (Dunn, 1968).

The following decades saw the debate around inclusion in ECEC services escalate internationally and a large scale rethinking of the necessity for access and equality for children with diverse needs (Roffman & Wanerman, 2011). This was in response to an increase in the amount of mothers of children with diverse needs wanting to return to the work force, which in turn, then created a higher demand for ECEC placements for their children (Mohay & Reid, 2006). There was also an apparent increase in the number of children aged from birth to five years identified with a diverse need (Nutbrown & Clough, 2010). In 1975, the United States of America introduced its *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*. This act delivered expectations to public schools that required them to make accessible a free and appropriate public education to eligible children with diverse needs that catered for their individual needs (Centre for Parent Resources, 2014). The imperatives of ECEC inclusion for children with diverse needs were also formally articulated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989), the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 2006), and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Salamanca statement [UNESCO] (UNESCO, 1994) on inclusive education. All documents recognise the right to education and

equality for children with diverse needs. The inclusion of children with diverse needs in Australian ECEC settings will be discussed in the next section.

Inclusion in ECEC: Australian Perspective

In Australia, the current law does not mandate inclusion of children with diverse needs into ECEC settings. However, over the past 30 years legislation has been introduced at the national, state and territory levels to prevent discrimination from occurring in ECEC settings due to a child's diverse needs (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1986-2004). The Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) of 1992 and the anti-discrimination legislation or equal opportunity legislation from each State and Territory government are the particular sources of legislation that directly impact on the prevention of discrimination pertaining to children with diverse needs accessing and fully participating in ECEC services. The DDA articulates that it is unlawful for an educational authority to discriminate against a student with diverse needs by limiting or denying such a student access to any benefits provided by the educational authority (Commonwealth of Australia, 2013).

Apart from anti-discrimination legislation, recent national mandated educational reforms such as the National Quality Framework (NQF) have been implemented to improve all children's access to a high quality early years education (Stamopoulos, 2012). The NQF, which was implemented on 1 January 2012 (ACECQA, 2011), advocates for high quality ECEC inclusion for children with diverse needs. It attempts to deliver and support a set of inclusion standards, principles and practices to ECEC services and educators through its National Quality Standard (NQS) and Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF). The NQS is a crucial component of the NQF and sets a national benchmark for Australian ECEC settings (ACECQA, 2014). It encompasses seven quality areas: *Educational Program and Practice*; *Children's Health and Safety*; *Physical Environment*; *Staffing Arrangements*; *Relationships*

with Children; Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Communities; and Leadership and Service Management. Each quality area includes standards and elements that can be used to assess ECEC settings and provide a rating from “Significant improvement required” to “Excellent” (ACECQA, 2011). The EYLF (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009), which is Australia’s first national ECEC curriculum, captures all birth to five ECEC programs represented in the Australian early childhood environment. The EYLF document *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* (DEEWR, 2009) has been developed for use by ECEC educators. It includes three key interconnected elements of *Principles, Practice, and Learning Outcomes* that help to guide educator pedagogy and curriculum implementation.

Inclusion, diversity, and equity underpin the NQS and EYLF. The NQS (ACECQA, 2011, p. 34) states, “Inclusion involves taking into account all children’s social, cultural and linguistic diversity (including learning styles, abilities, disabilities, gender, family circumstances and geographic location) in curriculum decision-making processes”. The EYLF (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009, p. 12) articulates “Early childhood educators who are committed to equity believe in all children’s capacity to succeed, regardless of diverse circumstances and abilities”. It is evident that the inclusion of children with diverse needs is a key aspect of the NQS and EYLF. This study explored how ECEC educators made meaning of their experiences of inclusion of children with diverse needs.

The Inclusion Support Programme [ISP] (Department of Education & Training, 2016) is another Australian national approach that aims to promote and maintain high quality ECEC inclusion for all children, including those with diverse needs, via Inclusion Agencies and the Inclusion Development Fund. The ISP is a component of the Council of Australian Government's (COAG) vision of all children having the best possible start in life to establish

a healthier future for themselves and for the nation. It provides professional development, advice, and additional resources to increase the knowledge and skills of educators working in ECEC, and to build the capacity of eligible ECEC services. The ISP also sets out to support ECEC settings in meeting the standards and elements of the NQS and EYLF, and the delivery of high quality inclusive education.

In the context of ECEC settings, high quality ECEC programs are defined as being available to all children regardless of any diverse need, which are then planned and implemented based on the individual needs of each child, including continuous evaluation of the curriculum to ensure active participation occurs for all children (Underwood & Frankel, 2012). Research has consistently demonstrated that facilitating children's full participation in high quality ECEC learning environments improves their overall developmental outcomes and sets them up for future academic success and personal wellbeing (Peisner-Feinberg & Burchinal, 1997; Pianta, Barnett, Burchinal & Thornburg, 2009; Sylva et al., 2006). The next section will introduce the theoretical framework of self-authorship and critical reflection.

Theoretical Framework of Self-authorship

Self-authorship theory has been used to understand personal epistemology in a holistic way by considering how individuals engage in meaning making through the three dimensions: epistemological (beliefs that individuals hold about the nature of knowing and knowledge), intrapersonal (identity), and interpersonal (social relationships) (Brownlee, Berthelsen & Boulton-Lewis, 2010). The theory of self-authorship was initially described by Kegan (1994) as a way to highlight an individual's change in meaning making capacity from the dependence on external authority to a personal internal authority. Baxter Magolda (2001) extended Kegan's theory in her longitudinal study of college students aged from 18 to 40. Baxter Magolda (2001) identified three phases in the development towards self-authorship:

following external formulas, the crossroads, and finally self-authorship. Each of these phases represents a qualitatively different meaning making structure, and signifies a continuing shift away from the reliance on authority towards one's capacity to engage in critical reflection to internally define his or her own beliefs, identity, and social relations (Baxter Magolda, 2008). While self-authorship theory has been used to understand educational practices in general (Baxter Magolda & King, 2007; Brownlee et al., 2010), to date there is an absence in the literature regarding the investigation of self-authorship in the context of inclusive pedagogies in ECEC.

The theory of self-authorship was selected as a theoretical framework for this study as it provided a robust and holistic way to investigate how ECEC educators made meaning of their experiences of the inclusion of children with diverse needs through their personal epistemology, identity and interpersonal relationships. This study is the first to explore inclusive practice in ECEC through the theoretical framework of self-authorship. The findings of this study have the potential to significantly contribute new knowledge and understanding to the research pertaining to ECEC inclusion by shedding light on how self-authorship may offer a different approach to help better understand the inclusion of children with diverse needs in ECEC and how educators make meaning of their experiences of inclusion. As critical reflective practice is a crucial element of self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2010), it also provided a suitable framework for this research to promote critical reflection for ECEC educators. The imperative of critical reflection in ECEC settings is discussed in the following section.

Critical Reflection in ECEC

The process of critical reflection is also a key aspect of self-authorship and how individuals make meaning of their experiences. Although early childhood literature often uses critical reflection interchangeably with reflective practice, critical reflection is viewed as a deeper type of reflection as it enables the ongoing professional learning of educators and subsequently supports high quality pedagogical practice (Cartmel, Macfarlane, Casley & Early Childhood Australia, 2012; Edwards, 2014). The EYLF (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009, p 13) defines critical reflection as the process of educators evaluating all aspects of events and experiences from different perspectives. Critical reflection is a dominant topic for several researchers who expand on this definition by making reference to the role of personal epistemologies in the process of critical reflection (Edwards, 2014; Ennis, 1993; King & Kitchener, 1994; Moore, 2014). Brownlee et al. (2010) also argued that critical reflection is evidence of an evaluativist epistemology as it requires the individual to evaluate multiple perspectives.

Critical reflection is a major feature of the NQS and EYLF and is viewed as a crucial aspect of improving the quality of ECEC settings (Marbina, Church, & Tayler, 2010). One of the main elements of Quality Area 1, Educational Program and Practice delivered in the NQS requires ECEC educators to engage in the ongoing practice of critical reflection regarding children's learning and development (ACECQA, 2011). The Guide to the NQS (ACECQA, 2011) further stresses the imperatives of critical reflection. It articulates that critical reflection increases the benefits of children's participation in the ECEC service and ensures that the educational program and practice responds to the individual needs of all children. Critical reflection is also included in the EYLF's (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009) five principles that have been developed to guide educator practice. Principle Five, *Ongoing Learning and Reflective Practice* encourages educators to closely investigate what occurs in their daily curriculum and pedagogy, decide what aspects of the program worked or did not work, and

then make changes accordingly. It also highlights that issues pertaining to the quality of the ECEC curriculum, equity and children's wellbeing can be evaluated and discussed through the ongoing cycle of critical reflective practice. Contemporary literature has also demonstrated the crucial role of critical reflection in the delivery of high quality ECEC programs (Cartmel, Macfarlane & Casley, 2012; Osgood, 2012).

In the context of ECEC, critical reflection permits educators to articulate, evaluate, and critically understand their own practice and beliefs (Gray, 2013). Educators' engagement in critical reflective practice also supports them to develop continually the essential skills, knowledge and teaching practices to achieve the best possible outcomes for all children (Marbina et al., 2010). Adopting the practice of critical reflection will enable educators to transform their existing values and beliefs, theories, and personal epistemologies about ECEC (Anderson, 2014; Brownlee et al., 2011a). If educators can engage in critical thinking about their pedagogical practice, it will support them to change and adapt according to the individual needs of all children and the continued restructuring of early childhood education (Galea, 2012). As critical reflection is underpinned by an evaluativistic epistemology (Brownlee et al., 2010), in order to promote such deeper reflection, one must focus their attention to their personal epistemologies and self-authorship. By its very nature, critical reflection provided a suitable way for this study to investigate educators' meaning making of experiences with inclusion of children with diverse needs. The following section will discuss the research aim and research question, as well as providing an overview of the methodology and the significance of the study and its findings.

Research Aim and Research Question

The aim of this study was to use self-authorship as a theoretical framework to investigate how ECEC educators experience the inclusion of children with diverse needs in

the ECEC learning environment. The research question used to guide and inform this study was:

How do ECEC educators make meaning of their experiences with the inclusion of children with diverse needs in their setting?

An overview of the methodology for this research project is presented in the next section.

Overview of Methodology

This qualitative research project used a multiple case study design to investigate how ECEC educators experience the inclusion of children with diverse needs in a single ECEC long day care setting. Given the focus of this study was on how educators make meaning of their experiences with the inclusion of children with diverse needs, the choice of a qualitative research approach was appropriate. Using an interpretivist paradigm, which recognises the socially constructed worlds of the participants (Denzin & Smith, 1998), this qualitative case study design permitted a deep exploration of the proposed research topic from the perspectives of three educators within their ECEC context. ECEC educators working as a centre director, a room leader and an assistant in one long day care centre were the participants in this case study. Data were collected through multiple methods including observations, and interviews. These methods are commonly used in case study research as they enable the researcher to authentically capture the lived experiences of participants (Onwuegbuzie, Leech & Collins, 2010; Simons, 2009).

Initially, observations of ECEC educators' daily practice were documented by the researcher using field notes, over a three-day period. This aided in understanding how inclusion was enacted by educators at the setting. To ensure the validity of observations, a stimulated recall interview (10-15 minutes) occurred after an observation of a significant

event related to the inclusion of a child with diverse needs (e.g., An educator adapting a learning experience to support the active participation of a child with diverse needs).

Dempsey (2010) described the stimulated recall interview as a suitable method for examining how individuals approach their interactions in various situations. Additionally, individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with ECEC educators. These were used to investigate ECEC educators' meaning making of their experiences with inclusion. Semi-structured interviews are a robust technique for data collection and are highly respected in the field of qualitative research as they produce data that are grounded in the experience of the research participants (Galletta, 2013). Interviews were audiotaped and transcribed to ensure accurate records of all conversations. The following section will address the significance of the study.

Significance of this Study

This multiple case study research project has promoted new insights into ECEC inclusion of children with diverse needs in the Australian long day care context by using self-authorship theory to help understand how educators make meaning of their experiences of inclusion. While previous research has indicated that attitudes and beliefs about inclusion may relate to educators' pedagogy in the ECEC learning environment (Bruns & Mogharreban, 2007; Grace et al., 2008), there is an absence of research that has explored educators' beliefs about knowing and knowledge (personal epistemology), identity (intrapersonal), and relationships with others (interpersonal) in the context of ECEC inclusion.

The findings of this study are of significance as they indicate that the successful ECEC inclusion of children with diverse need may be connected to educators' meaning making process, and their epistemology, interpersonal and intrapersonal development.

Findings of this study also suggest that the personal epistemology dimension, in particular educators' ability to be able to engage in critical reflection of others' perspectives, is a key component to the development of self-authorship and the delivery of inclusive practices for children with diverse needs. This study significantly contributes to knowledge of ECEC inclusion of children with diverse needs.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided the background information for this study, which explored the ECEC inclusion of children with diverse needs through the theoretical framework of self-authorship. It has also discussed information regarding international and Australian perspectives of ECEC inclusion for children with diverse needs. The theoretical framework of self-authorship and critical reflection were introduced next. This was then followed by the aims of the research, the research question, and an explanation of the research methodology and the significance of this study.

Chapter 2 will present a review of relevant literature regarding the inclusion of children with diverse needs in ECEC and the theory of self-authorship. It will explore the complexities of defining ECEC inclusion, and the documented benefits of and barriers to it. Inclusive practices and the role of critical reflection will then be discussed. The belief systems of ECEC educators, emphasising the strong relationship between beliefs and critical reflection and pedagogical practice are explored. Finally, literature regarding the theoretical framework of self-authorship and its contribution to this study will be introduced. Throughout this chapter connections will also be made to this study's contribution to the research of ECEC inclusion of children with diverse needs and self-authorship.

Chapter 3 provides an overview of the research methodology and design. This chapter will deliver a detailed explanation of the interpretivist research paradigm, research

methodology and method that was employed in this study. The details of participants, data collection and analysis methods, and the ethical considerations and validity of the research study will be addressed in the next section.

In Chapter 4, the analysis of the data from each of the three participants for this multiple case study will be presented, highlighting the key findings in light of the research question: *How do ECEC educators make meaning of their experiences with inclusion of children with diverse needs in their setting?* This question is addressed through the identification and presentation of self-authorship and its three dimensions, and the meaning making processes that the participants used to make sense of their experiences of inclusion.

Finally, in chapter 5, the findings presented in Chapter 4 are discussed and interpreted in consideration of relevant literature to self-authorship and ECEC inclusion of children with diverse needs. In addition, the limitations and implications of this multiple case study, and further research possibilities generated from the findings will be discussed

.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

In recent years, it has been recognised internationally that ECEC settings should provide learning environments that cater for children with diverse needs. The term ECEC refers to all service types that provide education and care for children including: centre based long day care; family day care; occasional care; and preschool and outside of school hours care (ECA, 2011). A key goal of the Joint Position Statement of the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC, 2009) is to address the imperatives of early childhood inclusion for children with diverse needs. The DEC is a United States organisation whose responsibility is to develop and distribute ECEC standards of practice related to young children with diverse needs and their families (Smith, Hemmeter & Sandall, 2006). The NAEYC is also an organisation located in the United States that focuses on improving the quality of ECEC services and the well-being of young children attending such services (Gruenberg & Miller, 2011). The DEC and NAEYC's Joint Position Statement argues that access, participation, and support systems are major features that can be used to define high quality ECEC inclusion and the desired results of inclusion for children with and without diverse needs should include a sense of belonging, and reaching their full developmental potential.

Additionally, the importance of ECEC inclusion is also evident in the Australian context. This importance is emphasised in the implementation of Australia's first National Quality Framework (NQF) in 2012, which reinforces the inclusion of children with diverse needs and is an influential driver for achieving high quality ECEC inclusion. This Framework is a national approach to the regulation and quality assessment of ECEC services and sets out

to advance the quality of education and care through its National Quality Standard (NQS) and Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) (Fenech, Giugni, & Bown, 2012).

The NQS establishes a national benchmark for the quality of ECEC services by highlighting the imperatives of educators supporting learning for all children in play-based curriculums (ACECQA, 2013; Barber, Cohrssen, & Church, 2014). The NQS also appears to embed and promote the inclusion of children with diverse needs in its quality areas. For example, the quality areas of ‘educational programme’ and ‘practice and relationships with children’ both highlight the requirements of ECEC services to ensure that all children are able to actively participate in the learning environments (ACECQA, 2013, pp. 10-11). Furthermore, the NQS articulates that “Each child’s current knowledge, ideas, culture, abilities and interests are the foundation of the program” (p. 28). This statement again may indicate the importance of ECEC settings facilitating the inclusion of children with diverse needs.

The EYLF is a key component of the Council of Australian Governments’ reform agenda for ECEC and provides a national approach towards ECEC programs (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009). It is a central part of the NQF and is strongly underpinned by a theoretical and philosophical foundation for respecting children with diverse needs and advocating for equity and inclusion for all children in ECEC learning environments (ECA, 2012). This is evident in its principles and practices of ‘high expectations and equity’, ‘respect for diversity’, ‘responsiveness to children’, and ‘cultural competence’ (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009, pp. 12-17). These practices and principles explicitly aim to facilitate an inclusive curriculum and pedagogy.

While ECEC access, participation, and support systems for children with diverse needs are evident in the Australian policy context, day to day experiences of ECEC inclusion may not be high quality for some children, families, and educators (Grace et al., 2008; Mohay & Reid, 2006). There is strong evidence to suggest that the quality and effectiveness of ECEC inclusion for young children and families is dependent on the educators working within the service (Buysee & Hollingsworth, 2009). Consequently, the aim of the current research was to investigate, using self-authorship as a theoretical framework, how ECEC educators experience the inclusion of children with diverse needs in the ECEC learning environment.

This chapter will present a review of relevant research regarding the inclusion of children with diverse needs in ECEC and the theory of self-authorship. First ECEC inclusion will be defined and the documented benefits and challenges as well as inclusive practices reviewed. Critical reflections will then be discussed, emphasising the strong relationship between reflective practice and high quality ECEC. Next, the relevant literature regarding the framework of self-authorship will be explored. This is followed by an examination of the connection between personal epistemology, pedagogy, and critical reflection. In conclusion, the literature review will highlight the current gap in existing literature regarding ECEC inclusion, and explain how this study contributed to the field of research about ECEC inclusion and self-authorship.

Defining ECEC Inclusion

The terminology of inclusion was first introduced to the education sector in the United States of America in the early 1990s and replaced the previous terms of preschool mainstreaming, reverse mainstreaming, and integrated special education (Odom, Buysee, & Soukakou, 2011). This change in language was driven in part as a result of the way in which

mainstreaming of children with diverse needs was being enacted in a number of public school environments for school aged children. It was also understood that the term “inclusion” represented more than the practice of physically placing children with diverse needs in the same classroom as typically developing children. Inclusion signified that children with diverse needs are a part of larger social, community, and societal systems (Odom et al., 2011). The term inclusion was quickly applied to early childhood educational programs and continues to be used by the current ECEC sector (Allen & Cowdery, 2005). Establishing a singular definition of inclusion that works for all children, families and ECEC is difficult and has been one of the biggest challenges for researchers past and present. This is because inclusion means different things to different people and can frequently mirror the practice of an ECEC service or a family’s expectations (Nutbrown & Clough, 2009). For example, an ECEC service may view inclusion as the practice of enrolling a child with diverse needs into the service, while a family may define inclusion as the provision of one to one education and care for their child.

Over the past 20 years, researchers internationally have provided various definitions of ECEC inclusion of children with diverse needs. These have moved from those concentrating on a child’s readiness for assimilation into a mainstream education environment, to those including adapting the curriculum and pedagogies to support a child’s sense of belonging (Petriwskyj, 2010). A variety of definitions of inclusion were evident in Clough and Nutbrown’s (2004) study of 452 United Kingdom (UK) early childhood educators. Clough and Nutbrown investigated the personal responses of educators to policies and the ways in which these policies impacted on their pedagogical practice. During this study, 182 participants from a variety of ECEC services were placed into groups of 5 or 6. They were then asked to develop and agree on a definition of inclusion that could be related to their own ECEC setting or service. These group discussions illustrated how complex it can

be to define inclusion. This study generated 34 different group definitions of inclusion, which were then categorised into narrow and broad definitions. The narrow definition referred to inclusion as an issue relating to children with diverse needs, whereas the broad definition acknowledged the importance of including excluded or marginalised groups. These narrow and broad definitions of inclusion have been replicated in other sources of literature and research (Allen & Cowdery, 2005; Clough & Nutbrown, 2004; Odom et al, 2011).

Rietveld (2010) also revealed a narrow definition of inclusion in a qualitative case study of three children with Down Syndrome and their peers attending different early childhood settings in New Zealand. Rietveld documented a common description of inclusion that encompassed the assimilation of a child with diverse needs into the early childhood service's existing culture with minimal disruption or adjustment to the existing programme. Results from this study also highlighted that educator and parent perceptions of inclusion revolved around the priorities of ensuring children with diverse needs were included in activities as opposed to relationships with typically developing peers. Rietveld (2010) argues in her paper, that this simplistic belief of inclusion stemmed from the main policy document used in New Zealand early childhood settings (Te Whāriki), which reinforces the supporting of a child's physical presence and encouraging participation in the same tasks and routines as other children.

Shifting the focus away from adult definitions of inclusion, Nutbrown and Clough (2009) explored children's understandings of inclusion. In their action research study of practitioners in 16 United Kingdom early childhood settings of different types that included state funded, independent and voluntary, Nutbrown and Clough documented children's voices regarding their interpretation of inclusion. This study elicited a children's definition of inclusion that comprised of providing learning spaces and making adjustments accordingly to

ensure that all children felt comfortable, safe and secure. Nutbrown and Clough (2009) also shared their own definition of inclusion in their paper, which focused on the process as ensuring that all the children in the ECEC service have a sense of belonging and they are provided with opportunities to speak and be heard. As evident in this study, the active participation of children and listening to their voices and perspectives helped gain an understanding of their knowledge and experiences regarding inclusion. It also reflects the increasing attention over the last two decades to the significance of involving children and listening to their voices and perspectives in ECEC research (Harcourt & Einarsdottir, 2011).

Though the complexity of defining inclusion is evident, most research perspectives share common elements. For example, Mulvihill et al., (2002) described inclusion as the full and active involvement by children with diverse needs in programs and learning experiences for typically developing children. Allen and Cowdery (2005) stated inclusion involves all children having the right to actively participate in ECEC, to have a sense of belonging, and be respected as members of that ECEC community. The active participation of children with diverse needs also underpins the DEC and NAEYC joint position statement on early childhood inclusion (DEC/NAEYC, 2009) and the United Kingdom's Early Years Foundation Stage 0-5 (Department for Education, 2012).

The rights of children with diverse needs to participate in ECEC is evident in Australia's peak bodies, Early Childhood Australia (ECA) and Early Childhood Intervention Australia (ECIA) (2012) joint position statement on the inclusion of children with a disability in ECEC. This joint position statement was developed in order to establish a vision for high quality inclusive pedagogies and to support positive outcomes for all children participating in ECEC programs. The joint position statement also describes a definition of inclusion that suggests that every child should have access to and be able to participate in ECEC programs,

which view them as active agents in their own lives and learning, and respond to them as individuals, while respecting their families as partners and engaging with their diverse needs.

A definition that focuses on the active participation of children with diverse needs was also evident in a project carried out by Grace, Llewellyn, Wedgwood, Fenech and McConnell (2008). Grace et al.'s investigation of the experiences of 39 mothers of children with diverse needs and 27 educators from the ECEC service in which these children were enrolled revealed a parent and educator definition of inclusion. All mothers viewed inclusion as the process of children with disabilities participating in the same experiences as typically developing children. The mothers also stressed that inclusion involved children with disabilities having a sense of belonging within the ECEC service and being accepted by both the centre staff and the other children. This definition is supported by the DEC and NAEYC joint position statement, which articulates that the defining features of inclusion are "a sense of belonging and membership" (DEC/NAEYC, 2009, p, 2). Extending the mothers' interpretations of inclusion, a key definition of inclusion to emerge from interviews with early childhood educators involved providing adequate resources and educators to accommodate children with diverse needs.

The incorporation of resources to accommodate children with diverse needs was also evident in a definition of inclusion acknowledged in Petriwskyj's (2008) mixed method study of children and educators in early years classes that included kindergarten through to Year 1 and Year 2. Using semi-structured interviews, Petriwskyj explored educator understandings of inclusion and diversity. These interviews also elicited another definition of inclusion from a selection of participants in this study. These participants highlighted that inclusion involved making structural and organisational changes to cater for children with diverse needs such as grouping them based on needs and accessing support services.

The definitional work about inclusion was relevant to this current study as it provided a framework to vigorously investigate how early childhood educators made meaning of their enactment of inclusion of children with diverse needs. In addition, the ECA and ECIA's joint definition of inclusion was used as the preferred definition for this study because it draws on all the preceding definitions highlighted. This definition encompasses the need for all children to access and participate in an individualised, child and family centred ECEC program. The joint position statement also provides a holistic and contemporary idea of ECEC inclusion. This is because it recognises that children are active agents in their own learning, the contribution of social interactions in learning, and the specific rights of children with diverse needs, as articulated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989) and the United Nations Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities (United Nations, 2006). It embraces both social inclusion and academic inclusion and takes into consideration both the child and their family within their contextual situation (Petriwskyj, 2008).

The Role of Inclusion in Enhancing Children's Developmental Outcomes

As highlighted in the previous section, a key aspect of the definition of inclusion for this study pertains to children with diverse needs being active agents in their learning. This has been reinforced in literature, which has also articulated the benefits of ECEC inclusion for such children (Mills, Cole, Jenkins & Dale, 1998; Odom, Buysse & Soukakou, 2011). Research has confirmed developmental benefits for children with diverse needs as a result of their active participation in inclusive ECEC settings. These developmental benefits were reported in Stahmer and Ingersoll's (2004) quasi-experimental study, which analysed the outcomes of 20 young children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) attending an inclusive ECEC service for children under the age of three. Data collected in this study showed a

significant improvement in children's functional communication skills and age appropriate play from the time of their commencement into the program. At entry, 50% of the children had no functional communication skills, while none of the children displayed age appropriate play. The reported results at exit point indicated that 90% of the children were able to use a functional communication system, and all children exhibited relational play.

Similar developmental outcomes to Stahmer and Ingersoll's (2004) study were reported in Stahmer, Akshoomoff and Cunningham's (2011) quasi-experimental research project that examined the outcomes of a group of 102 children age two diagnosed with ASD, who attended an inclusive ECEC program. Another significant finding in this study was that children's positive outcomes were dependent on the length of time they participated in the program, level of words and gestures displayed upon commencement into the program, and levels of externalising and internalising behaviours. The research of Hauser-Cram, Bronson and Upshur (1993), Mills et al. (1998), and Rafferty, Piscitelli and Boettcher (2003) also delivered evidence of benefits to the social and language development of children with diverse needs stemming from their active participation in ECEC inclusive programs. Other studies have highlighted the benefits of ECEC inclusion for typically developing children (Diamond & Carpenter, 2000; Rafferty, Boettcher & Griffin, 2001). These benefits are associated with typically developing children's increased recognition of diversity, and a better understanding of the needs of other children, and a responsiveness to other children's needs (Rafferty & Griffin, 2005).

Additionally, literature has positioned the contribution of ECEC to social inclusion within society as a crucial element in delivering a more socially just society by eliminating discrimination and inequalities for children with diverse needs (Wong & Turner, 2014). Research has revealed that negative attitudes and prejudices towards certain groups or

individuals can be seen in preschool aged children (Hawkins, 2014). Evidence supports the idea that participation of typically developing children in inclusive ECEC programs can positively affect their developing knowledge, attitude, and acceptance of children with diverse needs (Allen & Cowdery, 2005; Diamond & Huang, 2005). This is supported by Guralnick's (1994) study of mothers' perceptions of possible benefits and drawbacks of early childhood inclusion. Parents were drawn from a large community based sample of families whose children met the criteria for inclusion in one of four special needs categories. Mothers indicated a comprehensive support for the benefits of ECEC inclusion. One particular benefit expressed by mothers was that inclusion promoted the acceptance of children with diverse needs in the community and provided more opportunities for them to actively participate in a broader range of interesting learning experiences. This finding is supported by Allen and Cowdery (2004), who argued that typically developing children's engagement and interactions with children with diverse needs results in them being more tolerant of others in their future years. They are also more likely to develop a greater understanding and respect for diversity within society.

In contrast to the above findings, a number of researchers have reported that the social outcomes, in terms of peer interactions and friendships, are not always realised for children with diverse needs stemming from their participation in inclusive ECEC services. Guralnick, Hammond, Connor and Neville (2006) in their longitudinal research project across a two year period, investigated peer relationships of young children with mild developmental delays participating in inclusive ECEC settings. Findings revealed in this study showed only a modest increase in children's interactions with peers. In addition, a subgroup of children was identified who displayed poor peer interactions and were at particularly high risk for future peer interaction problems. Walker and Berthelsen (2008) continued the theme of examining the social relationships of children with diverse needs participating in inclusive ECEC

settings. In their study, they explored the nature of play activities and the social engagement of young pre-school children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Results revealed that the focus children with ASD had minimal social engagement in the inclusive program compared to typically developing peers. They also were more likely to engage in solitary play. However, this group of children, due to their diagnosis of ASD, might be expected to experience specific difficulties with social peer relationships.

The documented findings from the above research projects reflect other studies which have consistently indicated that pre-school aged children with diverse needs display difficulties in the area of peer social relationships (Brown & Bergen, 2002; Hestenes & Carroll, 2000). Literature has also revealed that children with diverse needs may experience social rejection from their typically developing peers and that separation exists in inclusive ECEC programs, particularly for extended and active social interactions (Buysse, Goldman & Skinner, 2003). This has been particularly evident for young children who display externalised behaviours such as aggression and hyperactivity (Wood, Cowan & Baker, 2002).

What is apparent in the research discussed in this section is that ECEC inclusion for children with diverse needs represents a concept and practice that has the potential to improve or hinder the developmental outcomes for children with diverse needs, as well as typically developing children (Guralnick, 2000). It is also evident that ECEC inclusion for children with diverse needs can help with eliminating discriminating attitudes and social inequalities for children with diverse needs (Hawkins, 2014). Additionally, the research demonstrates the crucial role that early childhood educators have when enacting inclusive ECEC programs, which is of keen interest to this current research project.

Challenges to Successful ECEC Inclusion

Although the benefits of ECEC inclusion for children with diverse needs have been extensively documented, the sector continues to experience considerable challenges to successfully enacting inclusion. Many of these challenges have remained evident since its conceptualisation and have been substantially addressed in research (Kemp, 2016; Mackenzie, Cologon, & Fenech, 2016). While hypothesised and presented in somewhat different ways, these studies have identified common challenges to successful inclusion. As previously discussed in the introduction section, Darrow (2009) identified educator professional knowledge and their beliefs, as significant challenges to ECEC educators ability to enact inclusion of children with diverse needs. These challenges, as well as challenges in regards to ECEC settings accessing funding to support inclusion will be discussed next.

Knowledge about inclusive practices. Professional knowledge challenges have been discussed in research as a hindrance to the delivery of quality inclusion for children with diverse needs. These challenges have been identified in several Australian research studies that have investigated the inclusion of children with diverse needs in ECEC (Grace et al., 2008; Llewellyn et al., 2002; Wong & Cumming, 2010). Mohay and Reid (2006) found similar results in a study of 77 ECEC centre directors and 77 educators. Participants in this research project were surveyed about their experiences of educating and caring for children with diverse needs, their training to work with these children, their attitudes to diverse needs, and inclusive practices and barriers to inclusion. The findings in this study pointed to a lack of suitable professional learning opportunities for ECEC educators pertaining to inclusion as a key barrier to successful inclusion. Petriwskyj (2010) also reported in a study of children and educators in Australian early-years settings, that restricted professional learning about diverse needs influenced the attempts by educators to adapt the learning environment and respond inclusively to children with diverse learning needs.

Similar findings about limited professional learning for ECEC educators have also been documented internationally. Educators have frequently articulated low confidence in enacting ECEC programs to children with diverse needs due to a lack of professional learning and experiences in appropriate inclusive practice (Frankel, Gold & Ajodhia-Andrews, 2010). The work of Huang and Diamond (2009) extended this by adding that educator confidence in supporting children with diverse needs was also influenced by the severity of the child's need. Research from the United States has also identified knowledge challenges. Muccio, Kidd, White and Burns (2014) conducted a research project that investigated the perspectives and practices of educators working in ECEC classrooms in the United States to explore the facilitators and barriers of successful inclusion. Using a cross-sectional survey design, which was combined with direct observation in Head Start classrooms, data were collected from 71 instructional professionals in three Head Start programs. Head Start is a United States federally funded program that typically provides ECEC to low income 3 to 5-year-old children and families, and is the largest deliverer of inclusive ECEC services for children with diverse needs in the United States (Gallagher & Lambert, 2006). Results from these data indicated that the lack of educator professional learning was a substantial challenge to successful inclusion. This finding is consistent with other research projects that have reported about challenges concerning ECEC inclusion (Clough & Nutbrown, 2004; Zhang, 2011).

In summary, these results confirm suggestions made in the literature that many early childhood educators are not confident in their pedagogies to educate and care for children with diverse needs in learning environments specifically planned for typically developing children (Chang, Early & Winton, 2005; Mulvihill et al., 2002). The research also suggests that high quality ECEC inclusion is dependent on educators receiving specialised professional learning in supporting children with diverse needs and then being able to make

relevant adjustments to the learning environment and curriculum to suit their individual needs (Buysse & Hollingsworth, 2009; Odom et al, 2011).

Educators' beliefs about inclusion. The beliefs ECEC educators hold about inclusion have been reported in numerous research studies as another challenge to the enactment of high quality inclusion for children with diverse needs (Brancato, 2013; Buysse & Hollingsworth, 2009). Research specific to the ECEC sector shows a clear association between educators' beliefs about inclusion and their willingness to include children with diverse needs in their program (Baker-Ericzén, Garnand Mueggenborg & Shea, 2009). Previous research has also highlighted that the beliefs that educators hold about ECEC inclusion can contribute negatively or positively to the enactment of inclusion of children with diverse needs (Mackenzie et al., 2016; Purdue, 2009). For example, Purdue (2009) suggested that educators who believed that children with diverse needs are competent were more likely to enact pedagogies that ensured they were not excluded from learning experiences.

The negative beliefs of ECEC educators' about children with diverse needs are reinforced in other research projects (Eiserman, Shisler & Healey, 1995; Rafferty & Griffin, 2005). Rafferty and Griffin's (2005) study of preschool teachers working in community-based preschool programmes in the United States also suggested that the severity of a child's diverse need was a significant factor affecting negative beliefs of educators and their enactment of inclusion. They reported that children labelled by educators as having complex diverse needs that included autism, emotional difficulties, and cognitive impairments were less likely to be supported by educators compared with children with diverse needs such as speech and hearing difficulties.

The beliefs of educators and how these relate to their pedagogies for inclusion were also identified in Grace et al.'s (2008) study of mothers' and educators' experiences of Australian ECEC inclusion. The research data documented that negative beliefs about inclusion held by educators resulted in the enactment of pedagogies that included children with diverse needs being excluded or removed from group learning experiences, paired with other children who had diverse needs, or placed in younger classrooms instead of with their same age peers. Adding to this finding, Grace et al. (2008) also recorded that most ECEC services in the research project had a belief regarding the number of children with diverse needs that could be enrolled, which was typically around one per classroom, or two to three per service.

In contrast to research that has highlighted the effect of negative beliefs of ECEC educators, strong evidence has also been reported in literature that has shown the positive influence of educators' beliefs on ECEC inclusion for children with diverse needs (Brancato, 2013; Hallahan & Kaufman, 2003). Educators who hold positive beliefs about ECEC inclusion are likely to implement a program that meets the individualised educational and developmental needs of children with diverse needs (Lindsay, 2007; Thornton & Underwood, 2013). Bruns and Mogharreban's (2007) exploratory study examined inclusive beliefs and corresponding practices of United States Head Start and public pre-kindergarten educators. Results in this study found that educators held similar beliefs that all children, regardless of diverse needs, can learn and that this learning should occur alongside one another. Educators also believed that they had the relevant skills to appropriately implement a learning environment that could effectively support children with and without diverse needs. Although, there was a sample of educators in this study who disclosed confusion about their ability to implement specialised strategies. These specialised strategies included individual educational plans and alternative communication systems for children with diverse needs.

Bruns and Mogharreban's (2007) findings are consistent with a study by Lieber et al. (1998) which investigated United States early childhood teachers' beliefs about inclusion and the ways in which they enact those beliefs in their learning environments. Explanations of educators' beliefs were elicited from interviews and program documentation. Field notes from classroom observations were also used to illustrate how educator beliefs were reflected in their teaching practice. The findings demonstrated that educators who held strong beliefs that children with diverse needs benefitted from social interactions with typically developing peers also successfully facilitated inclusive practices in their ECEC service. This included educators supporting the participation of children with diverse needs in the same or similar learning experiences as typically developing children, and adapting the curriculum and teaching practice to cater for children's individual needs. However, as discussed by Lieber et al. (1998), a sample of the participants viewed inclusion as the practice of simply placing children with diverse needs in the vicinity of typically developing children, without facilitating or supporting their interactions.

Other research has indicated that previous experience of educating and caring for children with diverse needs in inclusive ECEC programs influences the beliefs of ECEC educators rather than beliefs influencing their experiences (Essa et al. 2009). Buell et al. (1999) studied the beliefs and experiences of 189 United States family day care providers regarding their willingness to care for children with diverse needs. Findings presented in this study showed a clear relationship between educator beliefs and previous experiences with working with children with diverse needs. Participants were more willing to support inclusion if they had engaged with inclusion previously. Similar results were discussed in Mulvihill et al.'s (2002) study of the attitudes of centre and home based United States ECEC services towards the inclusion of children with diverse needs. The study showed a correlation between

ECEC educators' experiences of enacting the inclusion of children with diverse needs and the positive and negative beliefs that they held.

In summary, the reported literature about challenges to ECEC inclusion are relevant to this study as it suggests that educator experiences of working with children with diverse needs, and their beliefs about the effectiveness of inclusion, may affect the quality of the program. The literature also indicates that educators' beliefs and experiences directly influence their pedagogies and their willingness to work within an inclusive setting (Brancato, 2013; Odom, et al., 1999).

ECEC Inclusive Pedagogies

As indicated within the highlighted research that addressed challenges to ECEC inclusion, pedagogical practices of educators working in inclusive ECEC services may be influenced by their beliefs. The practices of educators have also been identified as another possible barrier to inclusion, as well as a significant facilitator to the delivery of high quality experiences for children with diverse needs (Fyssa, Vlachou & Avramidis, 2014). High quality inclusive practice, in the context of ECEC, is described by the EYLF (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009) as educators' practice of enacting an exciting and flexible learning environment that is responsive to the interests and abilities of all children. It also includes the practice of catering for different learning capacities and learning styles and inviting children and families to participate actively in the planning and implementation of the curriculum. This definition is supported by De Vore and Russell (2007) who also reported that adapting and modifying the learning environment and providing appropriate resources to support children with diverse needs are indicators of high quality inclusive practices. It is evident that the pedagogies of ECEC educators themselves strongly relate to the quality of the settings curriculum and its effectiveness for all young children (Buysse & Hollingsworth, 2009).

Examples of high quality inclusive practice were reported by Zhang (2011) in a qualitative study that investigated the inclusive practices of three Hong Kong ECEC settings. This research looked at the support and educational services presented for children with diverse needs as well as the features of ECEC settings that support inclusion. High quality inclusive practices of each of the three preschools involved in the research project included: curriculum adaptations such as individualised instruction for children with diverse needs; providing resources relevant to the abilities and interests of children with diverse needs; and including families in decisions regarding program development and implementation for children with diverse needs. These research findings are consistent with the results of additional research that have investigated educator practice in ECEC services (Buysse & Hollingsworth, 2009; Mohay & Reid, 2006). Zhang's (2011) reported findings pertaining to educator practice are also reflective of high quality inclusion indicators set out in the ECA and ECIA's joint position statement (2009) and in the NQS (2011).

High quality inclusive practices can also be related to developmentally appropriate pedagogies. Hollingsworth, Able Boone and Crais (2009) described guidelines regarding developmentally appropriate pedagogies for ECEC educators working with children with diverse needs. These guidelines described how children with diverse needs should be fully included physically, academically, and socially in the early childhood learning environment. These pedagogical guidelines are also reinforced within the definition of ECEC inclusion for this study.

However, research has regularly indicated that some pedagogies are in breach of such guidelines by being exclusionary in nature (Fyssa et al., 2014; Warming, 2011). For example, Purdue, Gordon-Burns, Rarere-Briggs, Stark and Tumock's (2011) explored ECEC inclusion in New Zealand. They labelled numerous exclusionary educator pedagogies that hindered the successful inclusion of children with diverse needs. This included educators failing to provide

individualised learning opportunities or adaptations to the curriculum to meet the diverse needs of children. In addition, they reported that some educators adopted a practice of segregating children with diverse needs from the curriculum and interactions with peers. Warming (2011) found similar exclusionary pedagogies in a study of inclusive discourses in Danish ECEC services. Data in this study were collected using a group interview from five preschool and afterschool care educators from five different ECEC services educating and caring for children aged between three and nine years. The research highlighted practices of segregating children with diverse needs into separate rooms to that of typically developing children. Warming (2011) also disclosed that the educator practice of segregation was driven by the need to keep typically developing children safe from the negative behaviours of children with diverse needs. Evidence that indicates a practice of segregating children with diverse needs is also evident in literature presented by Grace et al. (2008) and Odom (2009).

In summary, the research shows that there is a strong relationship between ECEC educator pedagogy regarding the inclusion of children with diverse needs and the quality of the program delivered. This reinforces the significance of the current study as it produced further evidence about how ECEC inclusion of children with diverse needs is enacted by early childhood educators. However, it is not only the enactment of inclusive pedagogies in ECEC settings, which is important for high quality inclusion but the extent to which educators engage in reflection on such pedagogies. The next section will explore inclusive pedagogy and the relationship with critical reflection.

Critical reflection in the context of inclusive pedagogies. Critical reflection is widely viewed within the ECEC sector as a crucial element of effective pedagogy and a key component in the delivery of high quality inclusion (Vakil, Freeman & Swim, 2003). It is linked to quality improvement and can empower early years educators to communicate and understand their own

pedagogy in greater depth, thus affecting their curriculum decisions and pedagogy (Gray, 2013). Osgood (2012) argued that the method and level to which educators are able to reflect on their pedagogical practice has a significant influence on the quality of it. The EYLF (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009) reinforces the practice of critical reflection by encouraging ECEC educators to critically analyse the curriculum, pedagogy, and children's experiences to investigate all facets from a variety of perspectives. This also includes questioning philosophies, theories, and understandings. Although there is agreement about the importance of critical reflection on education pedagogy, researchers are not always able to explicitly define it or engage in it (Moore, 2013). Miller, Nicholas and Lambeth (2008) proposed that critical reflection involves the relationship of the emotional and the cognitive that allows conflicts, reconfigurations and shifts in knowledge, understandings and identities. It also involves the process of weighing up and analysing multiple perspectives and having the skills to appreciate and participate in sound arguments (Kuhn & Udell, 2007).

Critical reflective pedagogy plays an important role in the implementation of high quality ECEC programs. Riojas-Cortez, Alanis and Bustos Flores (2013) explored the pedagogy of critical reflection in a study of five bilingual and generalist United States early childhood educators in order to reconstruct their beliefs and practices about teaching and learning. During this research, educators engaged in ongoing critical reflection and dialogue regarding theoretical perspectives and pedagogical practice. Results from the documented data showed a shift in the understandings and practices of participants. Educators moved from a belief system that initially viewed their role as controlling the delivery of the curriculum and children's learning, to one that viewed children as capable and competent. This facilitated children taking ownership of and responsibility for their own learning. Riojas-Cortez et al.'s research project reinforces previous research, which has highlighted that educator critical reflection about their pedagogy, beliefs and behaviours is a major influence in implementing and supporting fully inclusive, high quality early

learning environments for all children (Rix & Paige-Smith, 2011; Thornton & Underwood, 2013; Vakil et al., 2003).

Proctor and Niemeyer (2001) adopted critical reflective writings in a study that explored United States ECEC pre-service teachers' beliefs about inclusion. In this study, a key data collection method involved participants engaging in biweekly reflective writings about their classroom experiences and other issues. To support these writings, the pre-service teachers were given multiple questions that included: "after assuming responsibility in the classroom, how has your perspective on the teaching process changed?"; "What are some skills that you want to further develop?"; and "What constitutes a successful day and what factors are involved?". Findings produced from the critical reflective writings showed the participants' beliefs were underpinned by indicators of high quality inclusive pedagogy. They viewed children with diverse needs as competent, and that the role of an educator is to be a strong advocate for them.

The research suggests that successful inclusive pedagogy is reliant on educators' engagement in critical reflection on their practices (Stonehouse & Boschetti, 2013). In the current research, it is argued that the extent to which educators are able to engage in critical reflection on their pedagogy, is underpinned by their beliefs about knowing and knowledge. These beliefs, referred to as personal epistemology, form one of the three dimensions of self-authorship, which is articulated in the following section.

The Theoretical Framework of Self-authorship

Self-authorship theory and its three dimensions of personal epistemology, interpersonal and intrapersonal, was originally defined by Kegan (1994) as a means to understand an individual's movement in their meaning making capacity from being dependant on external authority to a personal internal authority. It also signifies an individual's development of the ability to analyse and make informed judgements

(epistemological dimension) in the light of their interdependent relationships with others (interpersonal dimension), and their personal beliefs (intrapersonal dimension) (Edwards; Creamer & Laughlin, 2005). Kegan's theory of self-authorship was extended by Baxter Magolda in a 21 year longitudinal study of college students from the age of 18 to 39 (Baxter Magolda, 2001). The theoretical framework of self-authorship has progressed over the past decade. In recent times, it has been used by researchers to assess the personal epistemological beliefs and practices of ECEC educators in an holistic way by considering how they engage in meaning making of their experiences through its three dimensions (Brownlee et al., 2010; Edwards; 2014; Mascadri, Lunn, Brownlee, Walker & Alford, 2016). Self-authorship also involves the capacity to reflect critically across the three dimensions (Baxter Magolda, 2008; Brownlee et al., 2010; Johnson, 2013), which are now discussed in detail.

Personal epistemology dimension. The personal epistemological dimension refers to how an individual uses their assumptions about the nature, limits, and certainty of knowledge in order to make knowledge claims (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). Perry (1981) labelled a scale of personal epistemologies that included dualism, multiplism, and relativism. Dualism refers to the beliefs held by individuals who view knowledge as simple and certain and conveyed by experts (Berthelsen et al., 2002). Individuals who hold multiplistic beliefs view knowledge as absolute truths but also agree that some things cannot be known with any certainty. Consequently, knowledge contains both personal opinions and absolute truths (Brownlee, 2001). Those individuals with relativist beliefs are able to engage in critical reflective practice and accept that knowledge is complex and changing, which enables them to evaluate multiple authentic and justifiable knowledge claims (Roth & Weinstock, 2013).

Self-authored individuals in the personal epistemology dimension are able to participate actively in constructing, assessing, and analysing judgments through various

lenses and points of view to develop their own internal belief system (Baris Gunersel, Barnett, & Etienne, 2013; Baxter Magolda, 2001). Baxter Magolda and King (2004) argued that cognitive outcomes that include reflective judgements, intellectual power, mature decision making, and problem solving rely on these epistemological capacities. They also stressed that the dimension of personal epistemology leads the development of the interpersonal and intrapersonal dimensions, and is critical to attaining cognitive maturity and an important element for achieving the other cognitive outcomes.

Interpersonal dimension. The interpersonal dimension relates to how individuals observe themselves in relation to others and how they construct their relationships (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). Within this dimension, the self-authored individual has the interdependence capability that enables them to respect their own and other's needs, negotiate the perspectives of others and participate in honest reciprocal relationships (Edwards, 2014). They also have the ability to engage with different social groups and are less critical of others (Creamer & Laughlin, 2005). The interpersonal dimension supports the development of self-authorship by fostering an individual's capacity to actively listen to a variety of perspectives, critically understand those perspectives taking into account relevant evidence, and make decisions accordingly (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004).

Intrapersonal dimension. The intrapersonal dimension of self-authorship is strongly related to the epistemological dimension and encompasses how individuals perceive themselves and construct their identity (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). It is connected to the development of an internally defined sense of self that provides individuals with the capacity to openly participate in challenges to their opinions and beliefs (Mascadri et al., 2016). As Edwards (2014) described, self-authored individuals have the ability to investigate, reflect on and internally select lasting values to form their own identity rather than relying on those of

others. The intrapersonal dimension, which requires individuals to self-reflect and explore their identity, can help foster the development of self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2008).

The development of self-authorship is discussed in the following section.

Self-authorship: The Three Meaning Making Phases

Self-authored individuals “accept knowledge is uncertain and judged in light of evidence relevant to the context; they actively construct, evaluate, and interpret judgments to develop their internal belief systems” (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004, p. 492). Many researchers have used the framework of self-authorship to investigate how individuals make meaning of their personal and professional experiences: How do I know? Who am I? What relationships do I want? These questions were explored using self-authorship theory in Baxter Magolda’s (2001) longitudinal study of United States college students. Results from the study confirmed three meaning making phases for participants incorporating their epistemological, interpersonal, and intrapersonal dimensions. Baxter Magolda (2010) described these phases as: *following external formulas*; *the crossroads*; and finally *self-authorship*. These phases will be discussed next.

Following external formulas. *Following external formulas* is the first phase of self-authorship. This phase is characterised by a meaning making structure that involves individuals relying on external authorities to decide on what to believe, and how to understand themselves and establish relationships with others (Baxter Magolda & King, 2012b). Individuals at the *following external formulas* phase also hold a belief that knowledge is right or wrong and can be provided by experts without the need to critically evaluate it (Edwards et al. 2016; Baxter Magolda & King, 2012). According to Baxter Magolda and King (2012), when making decisions, there is no evidence of listening to the internal voice for individuals at the *following external formulas* phase.

The crossroads. The *crossroads* is the second phase of self-authorship and is viewed as the transitional space between relying on external formulas and the achievement of self-authorship (Boes, Baxter Magolda, & Buckley, 2010). Individuals enter this phase because they start to become dissatisfied with following other's definitions and knowledge and begin to question the perspectives of authority (Johnson, 2013). Individuals characterised as being at the *crossroads* begin to experience tension between external structures and a want for a more internal meaning making structure (Edwards et al., 2016). The movement to the *crossroads* is evident as individuals begin to move away from accepting knowledge reported by authority and start to take responsibility for evaluating and constructing their own beliefs about knowledge (Johnson, 2013; Pizzolato, 2005). Pizzolato (2005) also indicated that the *crossroads* phase is crucial in the development of self-authorship because it is through the experiences of being at the *crossroads* that individuals' commence searching for internally defined beliefs, values, goals, and self-conceptions.

Self-authored. At the self-authorship phase, individuals use a meaning-making process that has an internal positioning (Baxter Magolda & King, 2012b). This internal positioning sees external influences moved to the background as the self-authored individual now has the capacity to use their internal perspective to evaluate others' perspectives as well as their own developed beliefs and values to influence their decision-making (Baxter Magolda, 2001; Johnson, 2013). The ability to critically reflect on, evaluate, and be an active participant in making judgments about knowledge from external sources to construct a belief system and identity that are internally defined, along with interdependent relationships, is further evidence of self-authorship (Baxter Magolda & King, 2012b). Figure 2.1 displays the dimensions and phases of self-authorship.

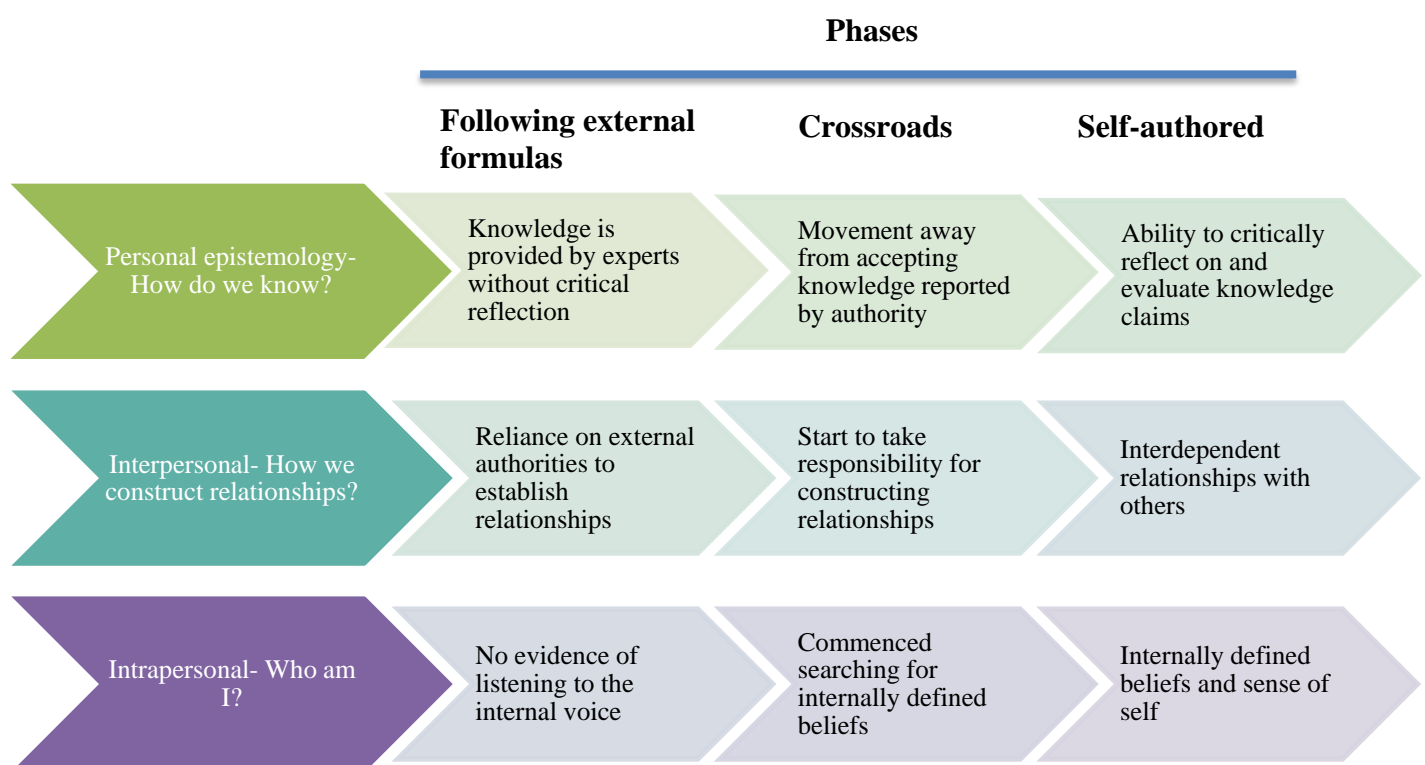


Figure 2.1. Phases and dimensions of self-authorship. Adapted from “Meaning-making among medical students: Development of a quantitative measure of self-Authorship,” by R.

Fallar, 2014, p.14. Retrieved from

<http://search.proquest.com.ezp01.library.qut.edu.au/docview/1536478414?pq-origsite=summon>.

The development of self-authorship was investigated in Pizzolato's (2003) qualitative exploratory study of United States college students identified as being at high risk of academic failure or withdrawal from college. Participants for this study were selected using a purposeful sampling method to ensure that they all met the high risk criteria. Pizzolato employed two separate techniques to collect data, interview and a demographic questionnaire. The interview focused on the participants' stories regarding experiences and decisions that they acknowledged as significant. Evidence presented in this study indicated that many of the college students held self-authoring ways of knowing prior to their commencement at college, although the level to which these ways of knowing developed varied amongst the participants. Primarily movement towards self-authorship was dependent on experiences that challenged the participants' current ways of knowing and formations of self. Pizzolato's study builds on the previous findings of Baxter Magolda (2001) who documented that self-authorship develops through the engagement in critical reflection to make meaning of experiences.

The theory of self-authorship was an appropriate framework for the current study as it enabled a holistic lens to explore the participants' meaning making process regarding their experiences of inclusion of children with diverse needs through their personal epistemology, interpersonal relationships, and identity (Baxter Magolda, 2001). However, it is argued that personal epistemology is the lead dimension in self-authorship through its links to critical reflection (Edwards, 2014; Mascadri et al., 2016). The next section will discuss the

relationship between personal epistemology and critical reflection for meaning making and self-authorship development.

Self-authorship: Personal Epistemology and Critical Reflection for Meaning Making

Self-authored individuals, in the personal epistemology dimension, are able to participate actively in constructing, assessing, and analysing judgments through various lenses and points of view to develop their own internal belief system (Baris Gunersel et al., 2013; Baxter Magolda, 2001). Such an evaluativist personal epistemology dimension involves the capacity to engage in critical reflection for meaning making, which is about the weighing up and analysis of multiple perspectives (Kuhn & Udell, 2007).

A robust body of research over the past decade has made strong connections between educators' critical reflection and personal epistemologies (Brownlee, Edwards, Berthelsen & Boulton-Lewis, 2011b; Brownlee et al., 2011a; Edwards, 2014; Silverman, 2007). The earlier work of Kitchener and King (1981) also made strong reference to both personal epistemologies and critical thinking in their reflective judgement model of critical reflection. Emphasised within this model are seven significant stages of reflection, with each stage representing a logically explicit system of assumptions and corresponding ideas that are used to justify beliefs. At the highest stage (7), reference is made to an evaluativistic personal epistemology in order for one to make reflective judgements. Kitchener and King (1981, p 92) highlighted that "knowledge statements must be evaluated as more or less likely approximations to the truth and that they must be open to the scrutiny and criticisms of other rational people".

Stacey, Brownlee, Thorpe and Reeves (2005) explored the relationship between critical reflection and personal epistemology in a research study of Australian pre-service early childhood educators' epistemological beliefs. The purpose of this study was to deliver an authentic experience in quantitative and qualitative research crucial to the construction of teaching

knowledge, while encouraging participants to reflect on their own personal epistemological beliefs and those of their peers and other educators, and to also examine changes in their beliefs over the duration of the study. Critical reflection on beliefs was stimulated by having participants interview a critical friend about that person's beliefs and then being interviewed by their critical friend about their own epistemological beliefs. Additional reflection was promoted by requiring participants to analyse their critical friend's beliefs and to document the results of these interviews in terms of the personal epistemology literature. Evidence produced in this study indicated that engagement in critical reflections on both personal epistemology and content related to research methods stimulated sophisticated beliefs for a sample of participants. These participants were more likely to integrate knowledge, criticise the authority of experts, and hold beliefs that success is connected to hard work.

Other research evidence has also reinforced the fundamental link between an educator's personal epistemologies and the practice of critical reflection in meaning making (Brownlee, Berthelsen & Boulton-Lewis, 2004; Kitchener & King; Valenides & Angeli, 2005). Bondy et al. (2007) researched students enrolled in a collaborative elementary and special education teacher education program. They proposed that students who held naïve personal epistemologies might require more support in the processing of information that encompasses the critical exploration of theoretical evidence. These reported findings position the crucial relationship between critical reflection and personal epistemological beliefs, and advocate for evidence-based views about the nature of knowledge and knowing.

In Australian research, personal epistemology as a dimension of self-authorship was suggested to be related to critical reflection in ECEC educators. Brownlee et al. (2010) used self-authorship theory in their study of Australian student ECEC educators to ascertain how their views of knowledge (epistemological), identity (intrapersonal) and relationships with

others (interpersonal) were linked to beliefs regarding how children learn. Semi-structured interview questions, which included an embedded common practice scenario that the participants might have encountered in their ECEC field experiences, was the chosen data collection method by the researchers. The results from the interviews articulated a self-authored profile for a sample of students. These students held a personal epistemological belief that involved critically analysing information to arrive at their own evidenced informed opinions. They also had a strong professional identity and recognised the importance of social relationships with families, children, and colleagues. Brownlee et al. also reported that to stimulate self-authorship it requires individuals to focus on critical thinking that includes the three self-authorship dimensions: evaluativistic beliefs (personal epistemological dimension), and in the context of healthy social relationships (interpersonal) and sustaining their own values and beliefs (intrapersonal dimension).

In other Australian research, the practice of critical reflection and internal meaning making, as part of a self-authored identity, was shown to be related to intercultural competence in ECEC educators working in Kindergarten settings (Mascadri et al., 2016). Using the lens of self-authorship, these multiple case studies were explored by integrating a developmental model of intercultural maturity with a compositional model of intercultural competence. Mascadri's integrated framework allowed for a thorough understanding of how the participants made meaning of their experiences with cultural diversity (self-authorship) and how this was connected to their intercultural competence. Data were collected through interviews, observations and analysis of centre philosophies, policies and observational documents. The findings showed the importance of evaluativist personal epistemologies and critical reflection in the context intercultural competence.

This link between evaluativist personal epistemologies and critical reflection was also reported in a study by Edwards' (2014) who explored the development of a professional identity of 15 Australian ECEC educators. Using self-authorship as the theoretical framework, Edwards interviewed the participants during their completion of a vocational qualification to work in ECEC. They were re-interviewed two years later after they had commenced working in the ECEC sector or were engaged in further study. The findings showed that only three of the participants could be described as having a self-authored professional identity with internally defined and critically reflective practice. Edwards also found that these participants had all followed different paths regarding their development of self-authorship and their knowledge of professional identity, and to a greater or lesser extent engaged in critical reflection. Edwards also suggested that self-authorship, with its emphasis on personal epistemology may support high quality pedagogies.

While this section has reviewed the literature that shows links between self-authorship, personal epistemology and critical reflection in an individual's meaning making, there is also evidence to suggest that a similar relationship exists between personal epistemology and critical reflection in an individual's construction of pedagogy. The relationship that exists between personal epistemology and critical reflection for pedagogies will be introduced in the following section.

Personal Epistemology and Critical Reflection for Pedagogies

Although to date the majority of research has indicated a clear link between the general beliefs of educators and their pedagogies (Bruns & Mogharreban, 2007; Grace et al., 2008; Lieber et al., 1998; Lindsay, 2007; Thornton & Underwood, 2013), a growing body of research now suggests that personal epistemological beliefs of educators also determine their enactment of pedagogies. Personal epistemological beliefs are reported in Brownlee et al.'s (2004) study of

Australian educators in toddler ECEC programmes. The researchers also provided evidence of how these beliefs influence teaching practices. Educators who held relativistic (or evaluativist) beliefs were more inclined to trust that even very young children could be supported to construct meaning. As a result, relativists were likely to adopt practices that led to open ended learning experiences. This is because they appreciated that knowledge was constructed rather than transmitted and were able to effectively engage in critical reflection in the development and analysis of their teaching practices. However, educators who held multiplistic beliefs were less inclined to hold such constructivist viewpoints. Instead, they viewed young children as active learners to the extent that they were able to model from others. Thus, multiplistic educators were more likely to utilise practices that include guiding and role modelling expected behaviours.

The connection between personal epistemology and pedagogy was also evident in Berthelsen et al.'s (2002) qualitative research study of six Australian ECEC educators working with children aged eighteen months to three years. The participants in this study were videoed within their ECEC setting and then later asked to define their epistemological beliefs and conceptions of caring for children during stimulated recall interviews. Evidence identified that two of the educators in this study held relativistic (or evaluativist) epistemological beliefs. These educators displayed sophisticated conceptions of care giving that combined ideas and made more connections between teaching and learning. Berthelsen et al. also suggested that educators with a relativistic stance were more inclined to implement pedagogies that involved educator and learner in active learning partnerships, and engage in critical reflective practice.

Even though literature about personal epistemological beliefs has shown a link to critically reflective teaching practices (Brownlee et al., 2011a), to date little research has taken place in the context of ECEC inclusion. Silverman (2007) conducted a study in the

United States that examined general and special needs pre-service educators' attitudes toward inclusion and epistemological beliefs, and the relationship between them. Silverman hypothesised that the pre-service teacher participants would display negative attitudes towards inclusion and somewhat naive epistemological beliefs that knowledge is simple and certain, and consist of definite right and wrong answers (Schommer, 1994). Data collection in this study was facilitated through the use of surveys about participants' epistemological beliefs and attitudes toward inclusion, and a demographic questionnaire. A major finding reported in this study contradicted the original hypothesis as the participants were found to hold relatively high level personal epistemological beliefs that were related with being patient, tolerant, and flexible in their actions with students with diverse needs. They also held positive attitudes regarding the inclusion of these students. Silverman (2007) argued that the results from the study highlighted that teachers who bring high level epistemological beliefs into their classrooms are more likely to enact effective inclusive teaching practices compared to teachers with lower level beliefs. This is likely due to a capacity to engage in critical reflection about teaching practice.

Additionally, Jordan et al. (2009) explored epistemological beliefs in their published literature *'Preparing teachers for inclusive classrooms'*. Examining nearly two decades of past research, they presented an argument that educator beliefs about the nature of diverse needs and their accountabilities for inclusion may be linked to a wider set of epistemological beliefs. The authors also presented evidence that a connection between inclusive practices and effective teaching may be dependent on an educators' underlying epistemological beliefs about the nature of ability, of knowing and knowledge, the method of obtaining knowledge, and therefore about the relationship between teaching and learning. To support effective inclusion Jordan et al recommended the need for both teacher education and in-service training to challenge educators' beliefs about ability and disability, and their resulting beliefs

about their roles and responsibilities, as well as their epistemological beliefs about the nature of knowing, knowledge and the process of gaining knowledge. These findings are of significance to this current study as they reinforce the strong connection between personal epistemology and critical reflective practice in the delivery of high quality ECEC inclusion for children with diverse needs.

In summary, the theory of self-authorship provided a suitable framework for this research as it offered a method to investigate how ECEC educators make meaning of their experiences of inclusion of children with diverse needs through their personal epistemology, identity and interpersonal relationships (Baxter Magolda, 2001). This current study has also supported previous research findings that revealed the strong relationship between critical reflection and personal epistemology and contributes to the research field of self-authorship and the inclusion of children with diverse needs in ECEC.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has critically reviewed the literature pertaining to ECEC inclusion of children with diverse needs and the theory of self-authorship. It has discussed the definition of ECEC inclusion, emphasising its complexity, and provided a definition of inclusion, which informs the study. This literature review has also provided an outline of past and present perspectives of the benefits and challenges to the inclusion of children with diverse needs in ECEC, articulated inclusive ECEC practices, including critical reflective practice, and the personal epistemological belief systems of educators working within these services. What is explicit in this documented literature is that, although there is a growing amount of research that highlights the benefits of ECEC inclusion, there are still major challenges that impinge on the quality of inclusion and practice for children with diverse needs. Additionally, there is evidence to suggest educators' personal epistemological beliefs and critical reflection are also connected to

the quality of inclusion and practice. Finally, this review of literature has introduced self-authorship theory, exploring relevant studies, and positioning it as a suitable framework to guide this current study. While numerous studies have explored ECEC inclusion of children with diverse needs, there is a gap in the literature regarding how ECEC educators make meaning of their experiences of inclusion of children with diverse needs in ECEC settings, using the theoretical framework of self-authorship.

Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework and Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to use self-authorship as a theoretical framework to investigate how ECEC educators experience the inclusion of children with diverse needs in their ECEC setting. It was anticipated that this study would provide new understandings of what ECEC educators think and experience regarding the meaning making and enactment of inclusion of children with diverse needs. ECEC educators' experiences of the inclusion of children with diverse needs was explored by interviews and observations across the three dimensions of self-authorship: the epistemological, the interpersonal, and the intrapersonal dimensions. This study investigated several topics of interest pertaining to the beliefs and enactment of pedagogical practice of early childhood educators working in an inclusive ECEC service. This included the role of critical reflective practice and the participants' understandings of inclusion of children with diverse needs.

This chapter will initially articulate the aim of this study, highlighting the significance and findings, and the research question that was used to guide the study. A comprehensive explanation of the interpretivist research paradigm, research methodology and method employed in this study will be introduced. It will also detail participants of this case study, data collection methods, and the ethical and validity considerations of the research study. The research question that guided this study will be identified in the following section.

Research Question

Researchers adopting a qualitative methodology seek to investigate a central phenomenon and participate in a developing process of research. Creswell (2014) indicated that these two components help inform researchers in the writing of specific research

questions, which includes a central question and sub questions. In writing research questions, it is important to frame them in such a way that they will offer flexibility and freedom for the inquirer to explore the central phenomenon in greater depth (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Simons (2009) argued that as well as providing a frame for the study, the research questions act as a reminder of the purpose of the research project to keep the researcher on task. The research question that was used to explore the central phenomenon in this current study regarding ECEC educators' experience of inclusion was:

How do ECEC educators make meaning of their experiences with inclusion of children with diverse needs in their setting?

By including a “how” research question, the issue of ECEC inclusion of children with diverse needs was able to be deeply explored using self-authorship as the theoretical framework. The next section will introduce the research paradigm for this case study.

Research Paradigm

A research paradigm establishes the context for a researcher's study (Ponterotto, 2005) and acts as a guide to support the investigation of the research questions. The research paradigm can be defined as an individual's set of basic beliefs about the world and how it should be understood and investigated (Guba, 1990). It deals with ultimates or first principles and signifies a worldview that defines for the individual the nature of the world, their place in it, and the choice of potential connections to that world and its parts (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). There are many paradigms used to guide research, and researchers include different paradigmatic schemas to conceptualise and organise their research (Ponterotto, 2005).

The methodological approach in this study drew on an interpretivist research paradigm, which recognises that knowledge emerges from attaining a deep understanding of

the data that are entrenched in the context of the study (Gubrium & Holstein, 2000). The interpretivist researcher seeks to describe how people make meaning of their experiences (Hughes, 2001) and speculate that data, analyses and outcomes will be grounded in the context of the individual with varying meanings from one individual to another (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). In principle, the interpretivist paradigm is constructivist in nature and suggests that individuals construct concepts, schemes and models to make sense of their social experiences (Edwards, 2014). The interpretivist research paradigm was appropriate for this study as it sought to develop a comprehensive understanding of ECEC educators' meaning making of their experiences of inclusion using the theoretical lens of self-authorship. It is also a well-established, explained and adapted research paradigm and is highly appropriate to qualitative research (Edwards, 2014; Goldkuhl, 2012).

From an interpretivist paradigm, the aim of this current study was to obtain and describe how ECEC educators make meaning of their experience of the inclusion of children with diverse needs in a single ECEC long day care setting. Therefore, a qualitative research approach was implemented to establish an in-depth understanding of the views of participants. As its name suggests, the qualitative research approach is concerned about the type of data that it elicits, namely text data (Creswell, 2014; Hughes, 2001). It enables a naturalistic method to the investigation of participants, phenomena cases, social conditions and processes in their natural settings in an attempt to expose in expressive terms the meanings that people assign to their experiences of the world (Yilmaz, 2013). Researchers who work from a qualitative methodology often endeavour to investigate the views of participants through comprehensive interviewing and observation (Forsey, 2012; Stake, 1995). They also rely heavily on these views as they seek to understand and explore the central phenomenon under investigation (Creswell, 2014). As Edwards (2014) argued, it is for these reasons that a qualitative research method is predominantly used in an interpretivist

paradigm. The qualitative researcher also rejects the belief that truths about the social world can be recognised by using natural science methods (Poni, 2014).

Although there has been significant debate in the literature regarding the validity of qualitative research (Attree & Milton 2006), it is still a widely used and respected approach in educational research. Cooley (2013) argues that the qualitative method is the most rigorous and inclusive approach when endeavouring to understand the complexities of education. Educators and researchers have embraced qualitative research as it provides a richer and more diverse insight into the delicate nuances of the educational setting and enables the deep investigation of the unexpected that cannot be supported in quantitative methodologies (Kervin, Vialle, Herrington & Okely, 2006). A qualitative approach in this current study enabled an in depth exploration of the meaning making of educators working in an inclusive ECEC setting. It also provided detailed descriptions of educator pedagogies when enacting the inclusion of children with diverse needs. The case study design of this research project will be addressed in the next section.

Multiple Case Study Design

The case study is a research method that has been commonly used by researchers in the education sector in order to investigate individuals, groups, organisations, and related phenomena (Creswell, 2014; Freebody, 2006). The case study is employed to secure information on more explanatory 'how', 'what' and 'why' questions (Crowe et al., 2011) such as those included in this current study. Case study research also assists the researcher to pursue a selection of different types of evidence found in the case study setting, which has to be abstracted and collected to access the best possible answers to the research questions (Gillham, 2000). Unlike other research methods, case study research examines one or multiple cases in an attempt to fully investigate and methodically analyse the phenomenon of

the study in its natural context (Alston & Bowles, 2003; Houghton, Casey, Shaw & Murphy, 2013).

Although researchers have presented many definitions about case study research (Cousin, 2005; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003), Simons (2009) describes case study research as a thorough investigation involving multiple viewpoints regarding the complexity and uniqueness of a particular task, policy, institution, programme or system in a real life context. Simons (2009, p. 21) also stressed that “the primary purpose of a case study is to generate in-depth understanding of a specific topic (as in a thesis), programme, policy, institution or system to generate knowledge and/or inform policy development, professional practice and civil or community action”. Crowe et al. (2011), who argue that case study involves understanding meanings and processes as interpreted by various perspectives attempting to comprehend individual and shared social meanings, support this definition. Case study can also provide further understandings into the gaps that may exist in the focus study’s delivery or why one implementation approach might be selected over another. Crowe et al.’s (2011) interpretation was suited to the research paradigm of this current study, as it is supported by an interpretivist paradigm.

In order to understand the phenomenon of ECEC inclusion of children with diverse needs, this research project used a multiple case study design to help explore, through the theory of self-authorship, the meaning making of early childhood educators supporting the inclusion of children with diverse needs in a long day care ECEC setting. A multiple case study design involves an investigation of several cases at the same time or in succession in an endeavour to form a solid understanding of the research phenomenon from multiple perspectives (Stake, 2006). The decision to utilise a multiple case study design for this study was suitable as it helped to facilitate a robust investigation and understanding of the complex phenomenon regarding the

inclusion of children with diverse needs in ECEC. The comprehensive essence of a case study design also permitted a deep exploration of the proposed research topic and question, and the meaning making process of educators within their natural ECEC setting (Simons, 2009; Willis, 2007). Additionally, the multiple case study approach enabled the researcher to conduct direct observations of the participants, collect data in the natural ECEC setting, and develop a thorough and authentic understanding of the educators' meaning making of their experiences of the inclusion of children with diverse needs (Simons, 2009). The decision to utilise a multiple case study design for this study is also supported by Yin (2003). Yin highlighted that a multiple case study approach has the potential to reinforce the results by duplicating patterns and as such increasing the validity of the findings. The following section describes the case selection for this research project.

Case Selection

When selecting a case to study, Stake (1995) argues that the most crucial criteria should be that it maximises what the researcher can learn about the phenomenon. Simons (2009), who also adds that the location of the case, travel costs and time are important factors that a case study researcher must consider, supports this. A significant criterion in selecting the cases was their willingness and consent to participate in the study. The cases selected for this multiple case study were three ECEC educators working in a range of roles such as centre director, room leader and assistant in the long day care setting, and who held a range of qualifications. In Australia, the National Quality Framework (NQF) provides minimum qualification requirements for educators working in ECEC services. These include Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care, Early Childhood Teaching (ECT), and Certificate III qualifications (ACECQA, 2014). The Diploma qualification covers the role of early childhood educators who are responsible for planning and implementing the curriculum in ECEC services, in accordance with the

requirements of the Education and Care Services National Regulations and the National Quality Standard. They may also have the responsibility for supervision of volunteers or other educators (Department of Industry, 2014). Early Childhood Teachers and Certificate III educators are typically employed as room leaders and/ or assistants, having the key responsibility of directly educating and caring for children on a daily basis.

The selection of the cases was appropriate for this multiple case study research as it aimed to learn more about the inclusion of children with diverse needs from those people who were actively involved in it (Hughes, 2001). It was also anticipated that interviews and observations of the selected educators would provide opportunities to explore and gain a deeper understanding of how they experienced and enacted the inclusion of children with diverse needs in the ECEC learning environment through the theoretical framework of self-authorship. This selection reflects what Creswell (2014, p. 228) described as ‘purposeful sampling’. Purposeful sampling involves researchers deliberately selecting participants for the purpose of gaining an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2014), and to answer the research questions (Kervin et al., 2006). The data collection methods of this study will be explored in the section below. The selection of the multiple cases, as well as the long day care ECEC setting for this study, was supported by the researcher’s current employment position within ECEC. This enabled direct access to the contact details of ECEC settings currently supporting the inclusion of children with diverse needs. It also ensured the geographical location of the cases and the ECEC setting were suitable, so that prolonged time could be spent at the centre, and travel costs minimised. Contextual information regarding the long day care ECEC setting and introductions to each case and their backgrounds will be discussed in the following chapter.

After gaining ethical approval from QUT Human Research Ethics Committee, a centre director of a long day care ECEC setting was initially contacted via email, to provide information

about the research project. The email contained information and consent package for the centre director, educators, and families (Appendix A). A follow up phone call was then made to the centre director to provide further details and an opportunity for possible educators to indicate their interest in participating in the study. Upon receiving confirmation of interest in the research project from the centre director, a site visit was organised to allow the researcher to meet the centre director as well as the likely cases, and answer any questions they had. A follow up site visit was then carried out two days later where written consent was gained from the participants.

While children with diverse needs were not participants in this study, their inclusion into the ECEC setting was observed and used as provocation for the stimulated recall interviews with the participants. Due to the possibility of children with diverse needs being observed, the information and consent packages were also provided to their family. The informed consent form provided an opportunity for the family to request that their child not be included in any observations made by the researcher. However, all families gave written consent for their children to be observed. Next, the participants for this study will be introduced.

Data Collection

Data in this multiple case study were collected through observations and interviews. These methods are frequently used in case study research (Gillham, 2000; Simons, 2009). The use of multiple data sources of observations and interviews in this study enabled a more balanced understanding of the phenomenon of early childhood educators' meaning making of their experiences of inclusion of children with diverse needs. It also permitted methodological triangulation, which is the process of validating evidence through different types of data, and a broader and deeper exploration of the participants' experiences (Creswell, 2014; Stewart, 2012). Information regarding the data collection methods used for

this study is presented in Table 3.1, and will also be discussed in more detail in the following sections.

Table 1

Overview of Data Collected

Interviews	Observations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 stimulated recall interviews (10-15 minutes) • 1 scenario interview (approximately 25 minutes) • 1 self-authorship interview (approximately 40 minutes) 	<p>8 hours of observations including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free play (indoor/outdoor) • Group Times and Planned experiences • Meal and Rest times • Children's arrivals and departures

Observations. Observations are a frequently adopted data collection method in the field of case study research (Simons, 2009). This involves the researcher eliciting open ended, first hand data through the observation of people and places at the selected research site (Creswell, 2014). The observation of participants in a natural setting permits the researcher to record the observed behaviour and can direct the researcher to a profound understanding of what is occurring naturally within the observed context (Kervin et al., 2006).

This study used non-participant observations to record ECEC educators' daily practice regarding their inclusion of children with diverse needs. Non-participant observations involve the researcher visiting the study site and recording notes without participating in the experiences of participants (Creswell, 2014). The researcher prepared an

observation template prior to the collection of data that defined the pedagogical practices that were to be observed and recorded during the observation of participants [Appendix B] (Given, 2008). These practices included those discussed previously in chapter two and which are defined by the EYLF (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009) as high quality:

- construction of the learning environment,
- program adaptations and changes to support different learning capacities and learning styles, and
- planning and implementation of the curriculum.

Non-participant observations were justified for this study as they aided in developing a rich and robust understanding of how inclusion was enacted by educators at the selected research site.

Individual semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured individual interviews were used to collect data from ECEC educators regarding their meaning making of experiences with inclusion and self-authorship. Semi-structured interviews were a suitable data collection method as they enabled the collection of data that were grounded in the experience of the research participants (Galletta, 2013). The flexibility of this approach allowed for the discovery or explanation of information that was important to participants but may not have previously been viewed as relevant by the researcher (Gill, Stewart, Treasure & Chadwick, 2008). Semi-structured interviews are also commonly used by researchers investigating self-authorship (Edwards, 2014). Each participant was interviewed twice over a two-week period, with interviews occurring in the centre director's office to avoid distractions and to ensure privacy. This enabled flexibility regarding educators' availability and work rosters. The first interview was designed around a scenario about an issue regarding the inclusion of a child

with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in an ECEC service. This took approximately 25 minutes. The second interview was grounded on Baxter Magolda and King's (2007) interviewing technique adopted in the Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education (WNSLAE) and took approximately 40 minutes. The WNSLAE interview strategy was designed to stimulate the characteristics of participants, the nature of their educational experiences that they deemed as significant, and how they made sense of them. The justification for using the scenario interview and the selected questions in the self-authorship interview is explained below.

Scenario interview. The scenario-based interview has been extensively used by researchers within the ECEC context to robustly investigate the understandings and experiences of early childhood educators (Brownlee et al., 2010; Brownlee, Boulton-Lewis & Berthelsen, 2008; Edwards, 2014). It has been reported that the inclusion of a common practice scenario that educators might experience working in an ECEC setting will enable them to connect with the research problem, and engage in more reflective conversations regarding their experiences (Brownlee et al., 2010). The scenario interview presented in Appendix B relates to an issue about the inclusion of a child with diverse needs occurring in an ECEC setting and was read to participants in this study. The format and questions within the scenario were adapted from the scenario used in Brownlee et al.'s (2010) study to evaluate ECEC educators' self-authorship.

Self-authorship interview. The self-authorship interview provided the open-ended interview questions that were used to investigate ECEC educators' meaning making of their experiences with the inclusion of children with diverse needs through the three dimensions, personal epistemology, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. The open-ended questions included reflect the recommendations made by Creswell (2014) and ensured that the participants could

effectively share their experiences of inclusion of children with diverse needs free from the perspectives of the researcher or past research findings. The use of open-ended questions is supported by Rubin and Rubin (2005) who also argued that to enable participants to answer questions that reflect their own experiences, researchers should avoid using closed questions that encourage yes-or-no answers.

The interview questions were separated into the following four sections: introduction; ECEC inclusion; self-authorship; and summary. Demographic questions concerning the participants' role, experience, and qualifications provided an introductory phase to the interview. Creswell (2014, p. 247) refers to this as the 'ice breaker' that helps to relax the interviewee and encourages them to talk. Establishing rapport with the participants is also a crucial consideration for a researcher during the interview process and supported the gathering of in-depth interview data (Kervin et al., 2006; Simons, 2009).

The ECEC inclusion and self-authorship questions were, as Creswell (2014, p. 248) describes, the 'core' questions in the interview to address the research question of this study. However, these interview questions were adjusted as the interview unfolded. Baxter Magolda and King (2007) stated that in order to encourage the interviewee to deeply investigate the issues the interviewer is required at times to reframe or refine the questions to elicit more substantive responses. This current research project used Baxter Magolda and King's (2007) previously effective interview approach as a foundation for the inclusion and self-authorship questions, by requesting participants to describe an important experience that they have had with the inclusion of a child with diverse needs that was then interpreted using the three dimensions of self-authorship theory.

The conclusion of the self-authorship interview provided an opportunity for the participants to reflect critically on their experience with the inclusion of children with diverse

needs. These reflections provided an opportunity for the participants to engage in additional meaning making regarding the inclusion of children with diverse needs as they explained what they have learnt from the experience and how these will shape their future pedagogical practice. The individual interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim by the researcher, enabling an accurate account of the conversations. Notes were also recorded on the interview guide to monitor participants' non-verbal responses and the developing understandings of the researcher. The interview guide is presented in Appendix B.

Stimulated recall interview. To assist with the validity of observational data, a stimulated recall interview (10-15 minutes) occurred after an observation of a significant experience related to the inclusion of a child with diverse needs. The stimulated recall interviews were then typically carried out in the centre director's office within an hour after the observation. However, due to participants' work commitments, on occasions, the interviews occurred the following day. The participants' understandings regarding the observation were initially discussed and this was then followed by the researcher asking a selection of two to three probing questions. These questions are detailed in Appendix B. According to Smet, Keer, Wever and Valcke (2010), the research method of stimulated recall interviews can make it possible to elicit decision-making, beliefs, problems and goals that are crucial when trying to understand why individuals do what they do. The stimulated recall interview was a suitable method for this study as it helped to develop a better understanding of the participants' experience and clarified their perception about what they were doing (Dempsey, 2010). The next section will look at the data analysis for the study.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in qualitative research requires the researcher to have an understanding of how to make sense of text and images so that the study's research questions can be

addressed (Creswell, 2014). Edwards (2014, p. 77) describes it as “an interrogation process in which descriptions are generated, explanations developed and links to ideas made within, and across, the narratives of the participants”. The analysis of data is also one of the most significant steps in the qualitative research process (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). Creswell (2014, p. 261) identified six steps that are commonly used by researchers in qualitative data analysis. These include:

- preparing and organising the collected data for analysis,
- participating in an initial investigation of the data via the process of coding,
- using the codes to establish a more general understanding of the data such as descriptions and themes,
- demonstrating the findings through visuals and narratives,
- interpreting the meaning of results by reflecting on the significance of the findings and on relevant literature that might inform the findings, and
- lastly, conducting strategies to authenticate the accuracy of the findings.

The data analysis process for this current study was informed by Creswell’s -step process, and the theoretical framework of self-authorship and its three dimensions: personal epistemology, and interpersonal and intrapersonal development (Baxter Magolda, 2001). It used a process of thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a commonly used method of data analysis in qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In general, it involves the researcher immersing themselves into the collected data in an attempt to identify, analyse and report key themes that emerge (Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013). Themes are collections of codes that repeat through being comparable or connected to each other in a patterned way (Buetow,

2010). Braun and Clarke (2006) articulated that themes are able to capture something that is crucial about the data in relation to the research questions, and that characterises some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set.

There are two primary ways that themes can be identified in thematic analysis: (i) inductive, where themes surface from the collected data; and (ii) deductive, where the codes are acknowledged prior to the data analysis and then searched for in the collected data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). Thematic analysis was an appropriate method for data analysis in this study, which focused on both inductive and deductive approaches in analysing the semi-structured interviews. A deductive approach, using the theoretical framework of self-authorship and its three dimensions, was employed to explore the meaning making practice of participants in their discussions about their experience of ECEC inclusion of children with diverse needs. The deductive approach has also been a chosen method in other research projects that have investigated self-authorship (Brownlee et al., 2010; Edwards, 2014). Next, an inductive approach was used to investigate the participants' beliefs about the inclusion of children with diverse needs and their pedagogical practice, and linking these to the three dimensions of self-authorship. The ethical issues of this study will be discussed in the following section.

Ethical Issues

A crucial element to any research is ensuring that it is underpinned by and delivered using an ethical framework. This study has ethics approval that has been gained through the Queensland University of Technology's Human Research Ethics Committee and is presented in Appendix A. Research studies are constructed on trust between the participants and researcher and are guided by two superseding rules of ethics: the researcher must attain informed consent from the participants; and that the participants shall not be harmed in any

way (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2009). Informed consent is the research process where participants are informed of all potential risks and benefits of the study before giving consent (Kervin et al., 2006). This study achieved this by initially contacting the centre director via letter and phone call. Participant information and consent letters were then delivered to ECEC educators. According to Baez (2002, p. 35),

Confidentiality is particularly axiomatic in qualitative research. Qualitative researchers are socialized to believe that, in order to ensure honest dialogue and avoid harming respondents they must promise confidentiality and get informed consent before they publish information obtained from their research.

To support confidentiality and anonymity in this study, pseudonyms were adopted for each participant and the ECEC setting. However, due to the small number of participants, and because they all worked in the same ECEC setting, it was also clearly explained to them that there was some risk of them being able to identify each other as well as being identified by colleagues at the ECEC setting.

Additionally, due to the data collection occurring within the participants' workplace, at all times, the researcher adopted a sensitive, and open and honest research approach. To avoid any possible discomfort for participants during their semi-structured individual interviews, they were reminded prior to and during interviews that they were not required to answer all questions and could end the interview at any time. Finally, member checking was also utilised in this study to enable the participants to check for any information that they did not want published. The process of member checking for this research project will be discussed in more detailed in the next section that addresses the validity of the study.

Validity

Designing and conducting a valid research study is the desired objective of all researchers (Angen, 2000). Research validity is concerned with how a researcher establishes the justification for the study, whether it is rigorous, defensible, comprehensible, well grounded, and appropriate to the case (Simons, 2009). The validity of this study was supported by utilising triangulation, member checking, peer briefing, and researcher reflexivity. These will be explained in greater detail below. However, a crucial element in ensuring research validity is the role of the researcher in establishing a rapport with the participants (Simons, 2009). The researcher in this research project facilitated this by conducting several visits to the ECEC service prior to the commencement of the study to talk over its details and clarify any concerns that participants may have had.

Triangulation. Triangulation is the process of validating evidence by carefully reviewing, comparing and combining different forms or sources of collected information (MacNaughton, Rolfe & Siraj-Blatchford, 2001; Oliver-Hoyo & Allen, 2006). It involves the researcher considering multiple views, and utilising different sources and methods to interpret meaning and provide corroborating evidence (Creswell, 2014). Although triangulation can happen in different ways (Kervin et al., 2006), it was achieved in this study through the comparing and contrasting of the data collection methods of interviews and observations.

Member checking. As mentioned in the previous section, member checking helped to strengthen the ethics of this study. It is also an effective method of eliciting feedback from participants on the researcher's findings, and is considered to be crucial for corroborating findings (Creswell, 2014; Schwandt, 2007). Member checking was attained by the researcher by asking participants during their interviews to extend on or clarify what they had articulated (Sandelowski, 2008). Copies of interview transcripts were also emailed to the participants to

let them check for accuracy and credibility of the data (Creswell, 2007). Each participant was then asked by the researcher to confirm if they were happy with the accuracy of their interview transcripts and if they wanted anything changed. All participants indicated that their interview transcripts were accurate and did not request any changes to be made to them.

Peer debriefing. Peer debriefing is viewed as another suitable method of supporting the validity of a qualitative research project (Su'o'ng & Nguyen, 2008) and was used in the current study. Peer debriefing is the process of allowing a peer or consultant experienced in the qualitative analysis process to review, discuss, and question the methods used by the researcher and the emerging findings of the research project (Kervin et al., 2006; Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). The process of peer debriefing occurred in this study by enabling the researcher's supervisors to check the coding of the collected data.

Researcher reflexivity. Researcher reflexivity involves the researcher being self-aware of the capabilities, values and beliefs, actions, and biases they bring into the research project while also developing an understanding of how these may relate to their approach during their research (Simons, 2009; Woods, Macklin & Lewis, 2016). To maintain researcher reflexivity for this study, the researcher utilised a reflective journal. This then enabled the researcher to critically reflect on and deal with any biases that became evident during the study, particularly in regards to pedagogies that were in opposition to beliefs held by the researcher. At the same time, the researcher also had to be conscious of the relationship to the research topic and the participants of the study (Dowling, 2006) to ensure that no biases were mirrored to them.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the methodology and design that were chosen as a means of generating and presenting how ECEC educators make meaning of their experiences of the

inclusion of children with diverse needs in the ECEC learning environment through the framework of self-authorship. Underpinned by an interpretivist paradigm to guide design and application, this chapter has articulated the appropriateness of using a multiple case study design, semi-structured interviews and observations as research methods in this study. Finally, this chapter has detailed the ethical considerations and validity of the research. The following chapter will reveal the data analysis and findings of the study.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Findings

Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of the data from each of the three participants in the case for this study, which was a long day ECEC centre with multiple children identified as having a diverse need enrolled at the service. The research question is investigated through the theoretical framework of self-authorship, enabling examination of the participants' personal epistemological, interpersonal, and intrapersonal beliefs. The question addressed is: *How do ECEC educators make meaning of their experiences with the inclusion of children with diverse needs in their setting?* The three interrelated dimensions (personal epistemology, interpersonal, and intrapersonal) of self-authorship theory and its three phases (*following external formulas, the crossroads, and self-authorship*) are used to explore how educators experience and make meaning of the inclusion of children with diverse needs within their ECEC context. First, the personal epistemology dimension of self-authorship refers to how an individual uses their assumptions about the nature, limits, and certainty of knowledge in order to make knowledge claims (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). Within this dimension, a self-authored individual is able to participate in constructing, evaluating, and analysing decisions through a variety of lenses and points of view to help them develop their own internal belief system (Baris Gunersel et al., 2013; Baxter Magolda, 2001). Cognitive outcomes that include reflective judgements, intellectual power, mature decision-making, and problem solving rely on these epistemological capacities (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004).

Second, in the interpersonal dimension, the self-authored individual has the ability to respect their own needs and the needs of others, to negotiate the perspectives of others and to participate in honest reciprocal relationships (Edwards, 2014). Such individuals are also more likely to interact with different social groups and be less critical of others (Creamer &

Laughlin, 2005). The interpersonal dimension supports self-authorship by assisting a person's skills to be able to actively listen to multiple perspectives, critically understand those perspectives taking into account relevant evidence, and then making decisions accordingly (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004).

Finally, within the intrapersonal dimension, the self-authored individual is more likely to have the ability to investigate, reflect on and internally select lasting values to form their own identity rather than relying on those of others (Edwards, 2014). They are also more likely to be able to generate a balanced internally defined sense of self that then enables them regulate choices and interpret their experiences (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). Furthermore, it is conceivable that self-authored individuals can use their internally defined sense of self, their personal beliefs and attitudes to guide their decision-making and construction of knowledge (Edwards, 2014). The interpersonal dimension is interconnected with the epistemological and intrapersonal dimensions by assisting an individual to actively listen to a variety of perspectives, critically understand those perspectives taking into account relevant evidence, and make decisions accordingly (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). Table 4.1 provides a summary of the characteristics of self-authorship and meaning making for inclusion for each participant.

Table 2

Characteristics of Self-Authorship and Meaning Making for Inclusion

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Isabella</i>	<i>Jane</i>	<i>Sophie</i>
	Following others and self	At the crossroads but moving on	<i>Self-authored</i>
Personal epistemology	Objectivist/Subjectivist	Subjectivist/ Emerging Evaluativist	Subjectivist/Evaluativist
	Relies on more experienced colleagues to help make meaning of experiences of inclusion and with validating opinions and decision making (Subjectivism).	Uses trial and error and a practical reflective approach to her pedagogies for inclusion, which enables the processing of information and reflection on implemented pedagogies (Subjectivism).	Uses a combination of practical reflection and evaluation of pedagogies and perspectives regarding the inclusion of children with diverse needs (Evaluativism).
	Implements inclusive pedagogies without theoretical or practical evidence to support them (Objectivism).	Openness to multiple perspectives, which permits the construction of knowledge about inclusion and pedagogies that then relates to decision-making and enactment of inclusion (Emerging evaluativism).	Uses a collaborative evaluativist approach to the construction of knowledge to support inclusion, as well as using personal beliefs as standard to test pedagogies from multiple sources.
	Believes that knowledge can be transmitted and absolute (objectivism) as well as based on personal opinions (subjectivism).		Believes that there are no right answers in ECEC inclusion due to the individual differences of children with diverse needs and circumstances (Subjectivism).
	Uses a practical reflective approach to pedagogies for inclusion.		
Interpersonal	Openness to others opinions and a focus on behaviour management pedagogies.	Openness to the perspectives of others that supports the establishment of open and respectful relationships with children with diverse needs, their families, colleagues, and external professional supports.	Values interdependent relationships that are respectful of other perspectives, collaborative, and practical in nature.
	Relies on following her more experienced colleagues to help her make decisions for the inclusion of children with diverse needs	Uses relationships to communicate and exchange information that aids enactment of inclusive pedagogies.	Values mutual conversations and good communication, which then permits the sharing of relevant information about teaching strategies.
	Values honest and trusting relationships.		Provides leadership and guidance to less experienced colleagues.
	.		

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Isabella</i>	<i>Jane</i>	<i>Sophie</i>
	Following others and self	At the crossroads but moving on	<i>Self-authored</i>
Intrapersonal	<p>Developed personal beliefs about inclusion and pedagogies.</p> <p>Has a connection to centre philosophy and more experienced colleagues to help validate decision-making and practices.</p> <p>Is moving towards an internally defined sense of self, which provides confidence with abilities as an early childhood educator when supporting inclusion.</p> <p>Is moving beyond “following others” to “following self” in the intrapersonal dimension.</p>	<p>Has an internally defined sense of self and professional identity as an early childhood educator.</p> <p>Trusts an internally defined sense of self and professional identity when supporting inclusion.</p> <p>Has confidence and independence to challenge the practices and opinions of others regarding inclusion.</p> <p>Reflects on the connection between own beliefs and professional identity.</p> <p>Has personal beliefs about inclusion that go beyond only referring to children with diverse needs.</p>	<p>Has an internally defined sense of self and professional identity as an early childhood educator.</p> <p>Has confidence and a capacity to look beyond the opinions of others to create own beliefs and values about pedagogies.</p> <p>Has confidence and independence to challenge opinions of others regarding the inclusion of children with diverse needs.</p> <p>Has a self-awareness of changing personal beliefs regarding how to support the inclusion of children with diverse needs.</p> <p>Has personal beliefs about standards of practice in ECEC inclusion.</p>

The data analysed in this study were collected through five individual interviews and eight hours of observations for each participant within the learning environment over a three-week period. Initially the data were analysed deductively using the theoretical framework of self-authorship and its three dimensions. The intent was to explore the participants' meaning making of their experiences with the inclusion of children with diverse needs. The data were then inductively analysed as this enabled an investigation of participants' beliefs about the inclusion of children with diverse needs and their pedagogical practices associated with inclusion.

To set the scene for the data analysis, contextual information about the ECEC setting where the research was conducted will be discussed first. This is followed by the profiles for each participant which include: an introduction to the participant and their background; a detailed analysis of the three dimensions of self-authorship, participants' beliefs about inclusion, and the pedagogical practices used to enact the inclusion of children with diverse needs; and a summary discussion of the participant's self-authorship with regard to their inclusion beliefs, and pedagogical practices.

Setting the Scene

The early learning centre which was the setting for the research project, is a privately owned and operated long day care service licensed for 74 children aged from 6 weeks to school age. At the time of the study, the service had a Queensland Government funded kindergarten program, located in a city in the Darling Downs region of Queensland, Australia. Families and visitors enter the centre through a glass security door that leads into a foyer. On most days, Sophie the centre director and participant for the study greeted the researcher, and she was usually located at the front desk in the foyer. In the foyer there was an area named Information Corner. It included a notice board with centre information for families, and selected documentation that included a story of a child with diverse needs,

policy documents, and brochures and books on various topics related to children with diverse needs such as interpreting services for Cultural and Linguistic Diverse families (CALD), early intervention, and inclusion support.

When asked during her self-authorship interview about the inclusion of children with diverse needs currently enrolled at the service Sophie responded:

We've got multiple children identified as having diverse needs in most of our rooms, particularly in the older age groups, as well as families with lots of diverse backgrounds and circumstances. This includes I think several children with food allergies, a [Child] who has Oppositional Defiance Disorder (ODD), and we also have children who struggle with their speech and language, and with regulating their emotions and behaviour. My belief and I think this is reflected with the whole centre team, is that all children are welcome here regardless of any diverse need. I also believe that early childhood inclusion means understanding every child for who they are and that whether it's a food intolerance or a severe medical disability or an attribute that makes the child behaviourally different in a particular setting, that a child has a diverse need of some sort and inclusion just means that we understand that child and work to see them be successful in early childhood (Self-authorship Interview, 21st March 2015)

Sophie's quote illustrates some of the diverse needs of children at the service during the study. It also indicates that she holds accepting beliefs about inclusion and understands the importance of it. This appreciation of inclusion is also evident in the points below which were taken from the centre's philosophy statement that was collaboratively developed by the centre staff. Within the Australian ECEC context a service statement of philosophy is a requirement under the NQF, and according to ACECQA (2012), it should outline the values that underpin

how a service operates, while also reflecting the principles set out in the *National Law* and the *Early Years Learning Framework*.

- To create responsive learning environments and relationships, equitable experiences, and a sense of belonging, catering for diversity and inclusion.
- To provide an environment that caters for the needs of all children, and encourages the healthy development of physical, emotional, cognitive, creative and social skills.
- To develop an inclusive program that respects and values the diverse backgrounds and abilities of all children and families (Early learning setting, Centre Philosophy Statement, 2015).

It is clear from these points that the centre's philosophy statement embraces the inclusion of children with diverse needs and recognises the diverse backgrounds, needs, and abilities of all children and families. This creates a strong image that the early learning setting is a welcoming and inclusive ECEC service. Furthermore, from these points, it is evident that the centre's philosophy statement attempts to deliver inclusive strategies and expectations to help to support children's developmental outcomes.

Evidence of the enactment of the centre philosophy is evident in the following quote as Sophie discusses how the centre provides an environment that caters for the needs of children with food allergies or intolerances. It also illuminates her own beliefs about the importance of continuity between the home and centre context. In addition, it may suggest the advocacy role of centre leadership regarding inclusion, and that it needs to align with the rhetoric of the centre's philosophy document. Past research has highlighted a strong

connection between high quality ECEC inclusion and centre leadership (Irwin, Lero & Brophy, 2004).

It depends on what the diversity is. If we have children with some severe behavioural disorders, I suppose then we work, obviously making connections with the home and school, researching as much as we can about that particular issue. Finding out what children's triggers are and then negotiating our teaching strategies around what the children are responsive to, and things that are manageable for the team for consistency. If we have children, obviously from a kitchening perspective, if we have children with food allergies or intolerances, then we create menus that are supportive of that, around the days those children arrive and juggle all of their different needs across a week. If it is a more severe disability that might require medical intervention, then it's a matter of doing a bit of doing a bit of professional development of what that is and then bringing strategies to support that child and that family into the centre and passing on that knowledge to all educators (Self-authorship Interview, 21st March 2015).

This quote illustrates Sophie's understanding of the individualised nature of inclusion for children with diverse needs and the various adaptations and changes that may need to occur to ensure that they can successfully facilitate their inclusion, which is evident in the centre's philosophy. Furthermore, adapting and changing the learning environment to support children's individual needs is viewed within the early childhood sector as an indicator of high quality inclusive practice (Underwood & Frankel, 2012). In this quote she also discusses the importance of seeking out information to gain individual knowledge that is specific to the child and their family, which can then be disseminated to all educators at the service.

This section has provided contextual information regarding the long day care ECEC setting for this case study. In addition, the inclusive views of Sophie, the centre director, have been explored alongside a thematic analysis of the centre's philosophy. This has helped to demonstrate the inclusive learning environment provided for children with diverse needs and their families at the centre. The following section will explore Isabella's meaning making for the inclusion of children with diverse needs.

Isabella's Meaning Making for Inclusion

During her participation in this research project, Isabella held a Certificate III in early childhood education. She was also working as an assistant educator in the kindergarten room. Isabella had been employed at the service for approximately two months, and had been working in ECEC for over two years. Prior to this role, Isabella worked at another private ECEC service, and was a nanny to two girls for eight months.

This profile demonstrates how Isabella makes meaning of her experiences with the inclusion of children with diverse needs through the theoretical framework of self-authorship and its three dimensions. A sample of quotes from her five transcribed interviews (Self-authorship, Scenario, and Stimulated Recall) and documented observations of her daily pedagogies will be used to describe and discuss the personal epistemology, interpersonal and intrapersonal dimensions that inform her meaning making of experiences with the inclusion of children with diverse needs. They will also be used to illuminate Isabella's beliefs about the inclusion of children with diverse needs and the pedagogical practices that she implemented to support their inclusion. Isabella on most occasions seemed relaxed during the interviews and observations, and responded openly when reflecting on her experiences of the inclusion of children with diverse need, their families and her colleagues. Interviews were carried out in the Centre Director's office at various times that were convenient for Isabella and the centre.

Personal epistemology dimension. This section explores Isabella's personal epistemology in the context of how she makes meaning of knowledge claims and processes information when supporting the inclusion of children with diverse needs. Data analysis of her individual interviews and observations indicated that she holds an overall subjectivist personal epistemology, with some evidence of objectivist thinking. As discussed earlier, individuals holding subjectivist beliefs believe that knowledge is individually constructed, intuitive, with little need to analyse competing claims because all opinions are considered equally valid (Berthelsen, Brownlee, Boulton-Lewis, McGahey & Dunbar, 2008). An objectivist personal epistemology involves a view of knowledge that is absolute and certain, which then allows for a single correct answer. Individuals holding an objectivist personal epistemology also believe that knowledge is observable and delivered via authorities such as textbooks or teachers (Brownlee et al., 2010; Roth & Weinstock, 2013). Evidence supporting Isabella's subjectivist personal epistemology will be discussed first followed by examples of a more objectivist stance.

Subjectivist personal epistemology. The nature of Isabella's subjectivist personal epistemology is reflected below where she talks about there being no right or wrong answers with children with diverse needs, just trial and error.

There's not a right answer because children with diverse needs there's never a right answer, you can try one strategy with another child and the other child and if you've got another child with diverse needs it might need a different strategy. There's no right or wrong answer with diverse needs there's just trial and error. (Scenario Interview, 21st March 2015).

It seems that Isabella will trial strategies based on each individual child she is supporting. Her comment about there being no right answers when working with children with diverse needs suggests that she holds a belief that all children are different and that she uses this as a way to

assist her with processing information and strategies to support their inclusion. Evidence of Isabella's subjectivist personal epistemology is also seen in the comments below made during her self-authorship interview. When asked about whether there are no right answers in early child inclusion of children with diverse needs she stated:

I guess there're no right answers and wrong answers. It's just what works for you. Like sometimes [Child] will not sit on the mat, and are other diverse needs children as well and there's three of them in one day. It is hard to try and include all of them when there's only two staff, uh, oh well three staff now actually. I guess the hardest thing is with including all of them is trying to make them comfortable and the whole class comfortable because when they're uncomfortable, they get louder and then obviously the kids can't hear us who are sitting on the mat (Self-authorship Interview, 21st March 2015).

Isabella's response to the question may indicate that she has a strong focus on ensuring that she experiments with strategies that she believes will assist children with diverse needs to be comfortable in the centre, emphasising the relationship between the personal epistemology and interpersonal dimensions. Based on this response, Isabella does not indicate if she weighs up competing ideas. There is also no evidence of critical reflection or evaluation, which further supports the interpretation that this quote reflects a subjectivist personal epistemology

Isabella continued to highlight her trial and error approach in the comments below that suggest she learns about her pedagogies through her everyday experiences and then testing them out to see if they work.

So for example with [Child] some of the things that my past educator was doing I didn't agree with but we were just, it was a trial, it wasn't something set in place. Ah with [Colleague], with my now new educator who's come across we've spoken about how we will address our diverse needs child, and I guess learning from experience knowing what

works and what doesn't work, and we've found out what does work with [Child]
(Stimulated Recall Interview, 9th April 2015).

This comment where she says that she did not agree with what a previous educator was doing further illustrates Isabella's opinions about best practice strategies to support inclusion. Yet, it also seems that she still would trial a personal opinion and idea of a colleague even if she did not agree with it. This may indicate a reliance on and trust in more experienced others when enacting the inclusion of children with diverse needs, and that she is able to learn from them. On the other hand, her willingness to trial a teaching strategy might reflect her role as an assistant and a personal belief that she must do what her lead educator says. In addition, her comment, *we've spoken about how we will address our diverse needs child*, also begins to reveal the connected nature of her epistemological and interpersonal dimensions, as it is clear that she has the capacity to interact and collaborate with her colleagues, and is open to their opinions and ideas. However, there is no evidence in these comments of Isabella's engagement in critical reflection or that she uses any theoretical or practical evidence when constructing knowledge regarding the inclusion of children with diverse needs.

The topic of trial and error for Isabella is again raised in the following quote. Here she indicates that she would only trial strategies to see if they work.

I'd trial it and see if it, ah obviously works, and if it works then I'd obviously believe in it and yes, I'd obviously trust would be there. Umm but for educators it's not really the trust, it's more believing in their teaching. Sometimes you don't believe in or you don't trust what they do, but if it works and it follows our guidelines here at [Centre] then obviously we go with that more. (Stimulated Recall Interview, 9th May 2015).

Although Isabella does not talk about reflecting on pedagogies in this quote, it can be implied that the fact she appears to learn from her trial and error approach suggests a level of

reflection that does not include analysing a range of different points of view. However, this level reflection seems to enable her to process knowledge and assist her understandings and decisions about her pedagogies to support children with diverse needs. Past literature has labelled this as practical reflection, where personal learning is based on trial and error (Brownlee et al., 2011a; Edwards, 2014). The quote also implies that Isabella's knowledge development is based on experimenting with the personal opinions and ideas of her colleagues. Her comment that *it's not really the trust, it's more believing in their teaching* may propose that her development of trust with her colleagues is dependent on whether their pedagogies work and are in line with the centre's guidelines. Isabella's capacity to engage in practical reflection is evident in the statement below where she talks about how she processes information given to her by her colleagues.

But I'm thinking that sometimes maybe why didn't I try that or I should try this and see what it does. Or sometimes if something's obviously complete off subject you're like "well that's not even going to work so" or something that you've tried already and would be very upfront and honest with it as well, an open relationship with the team is always the best thing to be (Scenario Interview, 21st May, 2015).

This quote also highlights Isabella's trial and error approach as she articulates about trying something to see what happens. It would seem from this statement that Isabella would only trial pedagogies that her colleagues suggest if she thinks they are going to work, yet again indicating that she employs a practical reflective approach. There is no evidence in this statement to imply that she engages in critical reflection or evaluates different perspectives.

Isabella demonstrates in the quote below that she learns and gains more knowledge by watching her fellow educators. This quote also reveals that she will observe the pedagogies of others so that she can process information and improve as an educator.

Watching others, by watching my fellow educator as she's got a bit more experience with those circumstances as I don't. Ahh seeing what she does to calm her down and bring her back into group time and read up and see what I can do to improve me as an educator, to make her feel more comfortable as well (Stimulated Recall Interview, 2nd March 2015).

It is apparent in her comment *seeing what she does to calm her down and bring her back into group time and read up and see what I can do to improve me as an educator*, that she uses a practical reflective approach when considering teaching strategies. This approach then appears to help give her the skills to work with children with diverse needs, and to improve as an educator.

Isabella again articulates her practical reflection approach in the following quote. It also indicates that she uses her own interest to help process information that is given to her by colleagues.

I sort of process it that if it's quite interesting, I make sure I get them to like, I write it down in our reflection diary, and if it's not interesting at all to me, I make sure, I'm just like "Oh my goodness, why would you even think of that?" Umm, and then I'll stop, and be like "Oh, I should've thought of that. Why didn't I think of that?" (Self-authorship Interview, 21st March 2015).

Isabella's comment about writing ideas down in a reflection diary suggests she engages in practical reflection about the decision making for the inclusion of children with diverse needs. It also reveals that she will consider the opinions of her colleagues when deciding on what pedagogies should or should not be implemented. However, there is no evidence in her comment that she evaluates these.

Objectivist personal epistemology. As well as holding subjectivist beliefs, Isabella also demonstrated some objectivist thinking. When asked in the self-authorship interview about how people have influenced her pedagogies for inclusion of children with diverse needs she stated that:

I've sort of just taken on board what they did last year and what worked with them. If it obviously worked with them last year, why should it not work with us this year? The kids have obviously grown up in a different room, but it's still what they felt was comfortable last year, and what the children would still feel is comfortable now. So I guess if it worked for them, it should work for me (Self-authorship interview, 21st March 2015).

The comment that she will take on board what worked last year signifies that she implements strategies without theoretical or practical evidence to support them. There is also no indication that she critically evaluates the perspectives of her colleagues or looks for alternatives and would seem that she views knowledge as something that can be delivered by one individual and accepted by another (Mascardi et al., 2016). In addition, Isabella's comment reveals that she may process knowledge based on what has worked previously. It appears that she will accept knowledge from her colleagues and then implement observed pedagogies with minimal reflection, evaluation, or theoretical evidence to support it.

Evidence of Isabella's objectivist thinking is also expressed in the following quote when she was asked why she would go to a particular colleague to access resources to support the inclusion of a child with diverse needs. It highlights her reliance on, and the guidance of, the authority of more experienced colleagues to aid in validating her opinions and decision making for the inclusion of children with diverse needs.

Probably because she's, got a lot more experience than me. I know she's probably seen a lot more than I've seen.....So if she's got an old textbook or something like

that, it would be more common knowledge than reading something on Google that's for sure or even just experimenting yourself. (Scenario Interview, 21st April 2015).

It would seem from the quote above that Isabella does not rely on the analysis of evidence to support her processing of information. Instead, her decision to test a teaching practice appears to be determined by the experience of her colleagues and the trust that she has for them. The following section reports on Isabella's interpersonal relationships and interactions with others within her centre context.

Interpersonal dimension

This section looks at Isabella's interpersonal relationships during her enactment of inclusion for children with diverse needs. Her interviews and observations revealed interactions with others that involved interpersonal relationships with families of children with diverse needs; colleagues; and children with diverse needs. However, even though she discussed external early childhood professionals, there was no evidence of interactions or collaboration with them, which might be expected due to her role as an assistant educator.

Families of children with diverse needs. Looking first at her interactions and relationships with families, Isabella described an emphasis on open and honest relationships. This appears to provide her with opportunities to share practical information with families about what has happened for their child throughout the day. The quote below illustrates this where Isabella talks about being upfront and honest.

You've just gotta be upfront and honest with them. If something happens during the day with their kids, you just don't get them to sign the piece of paper, be honest about what happened. But also when they come in make sure you meet and greet them and ahh take over the child, don't just say, "Bye, see you later." Make sure you go, "Oh,

and your child had, this, this, and this, had a good day.” Make sure you fill them in so then they’re happy. If they have a bad day, make sure you always end it with a happy note. So, I guess that relationship, you’ve got to try and build yourself (Self-authorship Interview, 21st May 2015).

It would appear from this quote that Isabella sees that her role with families is to facilitate the relationship and interactions with them. It also suggests that her relationships with families go beyond the friendly “meet and greet” exchanges. Her comment about filling them in so they are happy indicates that she informs families to ensure that they are content. There is no evidence in this quote or in her analysed data of mutual dialogue with families or if she offers them opportunities to share their views and opinions about their child.

In the quote below, Isabella continues to illustrate the practical nature of her relationships with families of children with diverse needs as she discusses her desire to build great relationships with them so that it makes it easier for her to access resources or to share information. When asked about how having strong relationships with families helps her as an educator, she responded:

Makes it a lot easier if you need something for the educator, like family photos or something like that. Or if something majorly happens you won’t stress, you like “Oh know, that mum and dad will understand this, it’s a childcare centre, anything can happen.” So that makes it lot easier if a piece of paper, incident report has got to be filled out, you feel less sick if it’s a great family that you obviously have a good relationship with (Self-authorship Interview, 21st May 2015).

From this quote it would seem that her aim in her relationships with families is to again communicate practical information to them and to keep them happy. Her comment about feeling less sick if it is a great family suggests that a threat to self may be related to her

interactions with families. In addition, it may indicate that she lacks confidence in her interpersonal abilities with families she is yet to establish a good relationship with. Again, there is no evidence that she actively collaborates with families or seeks out their perspectives during her interpersonal interactions with them, reinforcing her objectivist perspective.

Centre colleagues. The importance of honesty in her relationships with families of children with diverse needs was also a key theme to emerge from the interview data that addressed Isabella's relationships with centre colleagues. It also highlighted that she is somewhat reliant on them but at the same time relationships are founded on common grounds, with an emphasis on trust. As identified previously within the personal epistemology section, Isabella appears to rely on her more experienced colleagues to help guide her decision making for the inclusion of children with diverse needs. She was asked if she would trust all the opinions that are given to her around a teaching practice:

For example, my fellow educator's got more experience with diverse children as I don't, ah so getting experience and learning from other educators, I'd definitely take on hand (Stimulated Recall Interview, 18th March 2015).

Here we see that Isabella views her interpersonal relationships with her more experienced colleagues as a way to absorb new knowledge about working with children with diverse needs. It also suggests that this is a dependent relationship as Isabella observes and follows her colleagues when implementing the inclusion of children with diverse needs. This illustrates the interconnected nature of her interpersonal and personal epistemology dimensions. The observation below provides evidence of Isabella following the guidance of a colleague when supporting the inclusion of a child with diverse needs.

During indoor play Isabella approached a child identified as having a diverse need and informed her that it was time to pack up. The child did not respond and continued

to play. Isabella repeated her instruction and again the child did not respond.

[Colleague] then approached Isabella and handed her a visual strip and requested her to use it to help inform the child that it was time to transition. Isabella grabbed the visual strip and showed the child the visual. She also verbally told the child that it was time to pack up. The child then stopped what she was doing and placed the toy that she was playing with on the shelf (Observational Field Note, 4th March 2015).

It is clear from the observation that Isabella relies on her colleague for guidance and instruction when implementing a teaching strategy to support inclusion, again suggesting an objectivist personal epistemology. Her willingness to utilise the strategy without questioning may suggest that she believes her colleague's pedagogies are good and so can be trusted, or that this is a familiar practice often implemented to support the child. This reinforces the importance of trust within her interpersonal relationships with colleagues. Trust within her interpersonal relationships with colleagues is reinforced below where Isabella talks about the importance of being able to trust her co-educator to help fulfil her teaching duties and responsibilities if she is absent.

Having the great relationship with your colleague and your co-educator, you'd just bounce off each other. Like you know when you're both not in a good mood and you sort of just, oh, yesterday my co-educator wasn't in a good mood. So you just try and uplift their day 'cause if they're down then you're gonna get down, and the kids will be down, so it'll just be a hard day so you just try and bounce off each other, try and make each other's day. Try and make each other realise that we're just gonna leave it at the door, and try and continue on with the day. So and you can also trust them. If you have a sick day or something like that, you can know that everything will still be going. If she goes on holidays, I go on holidays, oh you feel that trust and that

confident that she hasn't let the slack down. That everything's gonna be fine, and everything's still gonna be running and all the paper works gonna be done (self-authorship Interview, 21st May 2015).

Her use of the statement “bounce off each other” may indicate that she uses her relationships and interactions with colleagues as a way to exchange views and opinions, suggesting some collaboration. It could also mean that she adopts a trial and error approach in interpersonal relationships with colleagues. It is evident in her comments *so you just try and uplift their day 'cause if they're down then you're gonna get down, and the kids will be down, so it'll just be a hard day*, that Isabella looks for support and to be supportive in her interpersonal relationships with colleagues. This then appears to help to ensure that they are each in a good mood, which she views as important for the mood of the whole group, rather than supporting for effective inclusive pedagogy. These comments also suggest that she has developed an awareness of how her interactions with her colleagues can also impact on the children that she is supporting. The quote below again stresses the importance for Isabella of supportive relationships with her colleagues.

I'd probably talk to, we've been going back to what they did last year with her because she wasn't as bad as what she is this year. But then again she's changed heaps in the last couple of weeks as well. Ah so I'd probably discuss with my educator, who is now [Colleague], ah and work on that, and what we could obviously do that's different. [Colleague] might have something else that's more textural feeling as well that could, would calm her down and just bounce ideas off as well (Stimulated Recall Interview, 9th April 2015).

It would seem from this quote that Isabella's interactions with colleagues are practical in nature in that they provide her with teaching strategies and ideas to support children with

diverse needs, which then help to keep them calm.

Although it has been identified that Isabella is somewhat reliant on her colleagues to support the inclusion of children with diverse needs, the quote below expresses that she is developing some independence in her relationships when individual beliefs do not match the centre's philosophy or regulations.

We had a fellow educator that came in a few weeks ago and ah I didn't agree with how she was treating the child, and I was just honest and told [Colleague] as well, that you know her belief is not what we do here at [Early learning setting], it is not, it didn't follow any of our rules like ah and regulations as well so we were just honest and told her that can't be done here under our roof (Stimulated Recall Interview, 2nd March 2015).

This quote shows evidence of Isabella's emphasis on honesty in her relationships with colleagues as it appears to assist her with ensuring what strategies are implemented. It also illustrates evidence of her intrapersonal abilities, as it would seem that she has developed some personal beliefs about best practice strategies to support inclusion, and that she has the confidence and independence to challenge the practices of her colleagues.

Children with diverse needs. The theme of being supportive in her relationships with centre colleagues was also evident in her interpersonal relationships with children with diverse needs. This also appears to be underpinned by openness and honesty. The supportive nature of her relationships with children with diverse needs is obvious below when she talks about some of the challenges that she experienced when supporting their inclusion.

[Child] doesn't like to be included in the group, she never has. So that's the biggest barrier, is trying to get her to sit down, and also be quiet, so you can obviously voice

your, whatever you've got planned for the whole group time. Uh, and then also try and make it so that [Child] does enjoy it as well so she can be included. So the biggest barrier is probably for her to sit down and be quiet so you can do your group time, 'cause when she's talking she's very loud. So you try, and one educator sort of sits with her and calms her down and make sure she listens and I also involve her in all the group times as well so she doesn't get bored and restless (Self-authorship Interview, 21st May 2015).

It is clear from Isabella's comments here that she sees her role as a supporter to ensure that children with diverse needs are able to participate in the daily curriculum and planned experiences without disrupting the group. Her comment about involving the child in group times so she does not get bored suggests that she considers how she can best support the child through her interactions. This interaction appears to be led and directed by her and does not provide any evidence of the child's viewpoint or agency being considered or valued. It would also seem that her interaction is about behaviour guidance rather than the child's learning as the expectation is that the child participates in the group time and that it is her role to make it happen. This expectation and her apparent focus on behaviour guidance are reinforced in the following room observation conducted during a planned group time.

Isabella was conducting a whole group mat time. A child with diverse needs appeared to not want to participate. The child moved around the room and engaged with other self-selected resources. Isabella attempted, on several occasions, to encourage the child to participate. She did this by highlighting to the child a spider image on the mat which children were sitting on. Isabella said "come and find your spider", "where is your spider?" The child did not respond and continued to engage with her own resource (Observational Field Notes, 25th February, 2015).

From this observation it would seem that Isabella has developed a strong belief about planned group times that involves all children participating regardless of their motivation or willingness to participate. This is reinforced in her multiple attempts to encourage the child to join the group, which again may indicate a focus on behaviour guidance in her interactions with children. It also shows the interconnected relationship between her interpersonal and intrapersonal dimensions, as it appears her group time beliefs about participation may be attributed to the type of interactions that she has with the child. In addition, although Isabella showed care and respect for the child during this observation, again there is no evidence of her seeking the child's perspective or offering choice regarding the child's participation.

What is also evident in the data analysis is that Isabella uses her interactions with children to help keep them calm and comfortable. This strong focus on supporting children to be calm is revealed in the quote below where Isabella reflected about the reasons behind introducing a teaching strategy for a child with diverse needs.

For that type of diverse needs child, it's hard for the brain to turn off. So instead of her going to the next extreme, which she would of done because she would have been uncomfortable with that whole scenario, and she would have been screaming and doing her thing, I just went and got the thing just for a distraction for her, and for the other educators as well because it's a lot more calmer in the room, and all the other children as well when she's more calm and settled as well and, maybe the felt is a texture, textile type of thing that she feels comfortable with (Stimulated Recall Interview, 9th April 2015).

Here Isabella discusses the nature of her relationship with the child, which seems to be based on having a sound knowledge of their individual needs as well as behaviour guidance. This appears to then help her intervene with a teaching strategy before the child becomes

distressed, and as such keeping the child and room calm. Isabella's awareness of the child's needs in the comment above demonstrates her ability to understand the individual needs of children in order to correct their behaviour when required. This reinforces her objectivist thinking as it is clear that she delivers information to the child without seeking the child's perspective during the interaction, ensuring that correct behaviour is used. It also again highlights a focus on preventing disruption to the learning environment through supportive relationships and interactions with children with diverse needs.

Finally, throughout the interviews Isabella discussed the importance of preparing children with diverse needs for school within her interactions with them. She also reflected on the pedagogies that she uses to support this, which are evident in the quote below.

So with the group time we try and get everyone to sit down because they will have to do it in school. So they've got their attention span now we have it a little bit longer. We do more stuff, like English and literacy, and uh, sorry, English and numeracy. Like at the moment it's what you wanna do when you grow up. So we make sure we sit down and we get involved with all the groups, ask every individual child and making it more fun in their experience because their attention span needs to grow. So they need to learn how to sit still for a long period of time 'cause their group time could go for half an hour next year so they need to learn to sit there and listen to the teacher, and make sure they're actually zoning in all the time. (Self-authorship Interview, 21st April 2015).

Isabella's comments *so with the group time we try and get everyone to sit down because they will have to do it in school* and *they need to learn how to sit still for a long period of time 'cause their group time could go for half an hour next year* again reinforces a behaviour guidance focus of her interactions with children with diverse needs. Her comments also

highlight the interconnected nature of the personal epistemology, interpersonal, and intrapersonal dimensions. It reveals that she has developed a personal belief (intrapersonal) about children with diverse needs needing to develop skills that will assist with their transition to school, and that there is a right way, which can be transmitted (objectivism) to them by her relationships and interactions (interpersonal). Isabella's intrapersonal dimension will be explored in the following section.

Intrapersonal dimension

This section describes the intrapersonal dimension and focuses on Isabella's sense of self and beliefs regarding the inclusion of children with diverse needs that have been articulated in her interview and observation data. While analysing the intrapersonal data it became evident that, although Isabella has developed some personal beliefs about inclusion and pedagogies, she is somewhat dependent on her more experienced colleagues to help validate her decision making when enacting inclusion. In addition to this it appears that she is also reliant on her centre's philosophy. This is evident in the following comments when she was questioned about an important experience that she had when supporting the inclusion of a child with diverse needs.

We had a particular lady come in and she was quite aggressive to her trying to support our diverse need child. It was just a trial that she was doing with the parents that they thought would be safe. Obviously, it wasn't, not what we do here, wasn't meeting our philosophy or anything like that so we had to be really upfront and honest with her, because it wasn't protecting the child. It was more harming the child and every other child as well. We've got 20 other kids to worry about, and their safety and it was making everyone upset. So, that was the lovely experience I had to deal with that and we dealt with it the way it should've been (Self-authorship Interview, 21st April

2015).

Here Isabella suggests that her centre philosophy has helped her develop beliefs about inclusion of children with diverse needs that are based on protecting them and keeping them safe. In addition, her statement about being upfront and honest indicates that she has the confidence to express these beliefs to others. This supports her interpersonal capability that has a strong focus on honesty within her relationships with others. Isabella's interpersonal skill of being upfront and honest, and her intrapersonal belief about protecting children and keeping them safe is evident below.

I'd just be upfront and honest with the whole situation if someone said "maybe putting more pressure on him" or something like that I just be like "no that is not happening at all". Like it just wouldn't happen. One it doesn't, it doesn't comply with what we do here at [Early learning setting] either, and two it's not safe on the child. More pressure would mean he would be feeling more ah covered and strangled so no, and I wouldn't feel comfortable doing that either, never would do it to a kid either (Stimulated Recall Interview, 18th March 2015).

It is clear that her beliefs about inclusion and her sense of self give her the confidence to challenge the practices of other educators. Isabella's comment also shows evidence that she has developed some beliefs about the implementation of best practice teaching strategies to support children with diverse needs.

The field note observation below provides evidence of her developing sense of self, which appears to also provide her with the confidence to deal with challenging situations when supporting the inclusion of children with diverse needs.

A child with diverse needs was becoming disruptive within the indoor learning

environment. The child was running around the room and throwing resources. Isabella communicated to another educator that she was going to get the felts to help try and calm the child down. She left the room and returned a short time later with a container of felts and a felt board. Isabella placed them at a table and then verbally gained the child's attention by asking if the child wanted to play with the felts. The child stopped running and went and sat at the table and began playing with the felts (Observational Field Notes, 4th March 2015).

In this observation, Isabella shows independence as she acts quickly and confidently, ensuring that child was calmed quickly and redirected to a more appropriate experience. It also illustrates her interpersonal relationships with children with diverse needs that appears to have a strong focus on behaviour guidance and preventing them from disrupting the learning environment. Although Isabella is somewhat still dependent on her colleagues when enacting inclusion for children with diverse needs, this observation shows evidence that she is developing some independence with her decision making, indicating movement towards a more internally defined sense of self as an early childhood educator.

Additional evidence of Isabella's movement towards a more internally defined sense of self and confidence in her abilities as an early childhood educator when supporting the inclusion of children with diverse needs is evident in the quote below. When asked about how a particular challenging experience had influenced the way she sees herself as an early childhood educator, she stated:

I see myself as an educator. I see myself that obviously some educators can't really deal with those type of situations. I see myself now as I've been challenged by those situations that now I, it doesn't worry me to deal with a situation like that, and to be honest and upfront, it makes me more stronger as a person, I suppose, and more

stronger that I now know how she feels or how to deal with her when she is uncomfortable. So it's more made me better as a person and sort of made me more interested in the whole subject, and obviously made it more easier to deal with her (Self-authorship Interview, 21st April 2015).

This quote suggests that her sense of self as an early childhood educator supporting the inclusion of children with diverse needs is somewhat grounded in her experiences with them, particularly when having to deal with challenging situations. Her comment about some educators not being able to deal with a type of situation also may indicate that she is developing the capacity to question the practices of other educators and their ability to enact inclusion of children with diverse needs. In addition, it again shows evidence of her personal beliefs about inclusion.

Finally, further confirmation of Isabella's emerging internally defined sense of self is obvious in the comments below made during her scenario interview when questioned about what she would do in a particular situation and why.

I'd feel very uncomfortable with the situation that he was hearing and saw and most likely would try and confront the educator with what we could do to obviously not make that child so upset. Oscar seemed very unsettled, ah in both ways that she's tried the first by attempting to drag, not dragging him, but use hand force to take him inside and also sitting down and putting pressure on him that can work but also if it can't work there should be another way to look at it (Scenario Interview, 21st April 2015).

This response again reinforces Isabella's beliefs about inclusion and her confidence with pedagogies to support children with diverse needs. Her comment *I'd feel very uncomfortable with the situation that he was hearing and saw and most likely would try and confront the educator with what we could do to obviously not make that child so upset*, may also indicate

that she has the intrapersonal capacity to challenge the pedagogies of others and offer her own perspective.

Section Summary

The theoretical framework of self-authorship and its three dimensions has assisted with identifying the processes that Isabella uses to make meaning of her experiences of inclusion of children with diverse needs. It has also helped to demonstrate her ability to support inclusion within her centre context. Baxter Magolda (2001) identified three phases in the development towards self-authorship: *following external formulas*, *the crossroads*, and finally *self-authorship*. Based on these three phases, it would seem that Isabella is at the *following external formulas* phase when enacting the inclusion of children with diverse needs. This is reinforced in her objectivist stance as she somewhat relies on her more experienced colleagues to help make meaning of her experiences of the inclusion of children with diverse needs and with validating her opinions and decision making. The reliance on external sources to make meaning of their experiences is a common approach for individuals labelled as *following external formulas* (Baxter Magolda & King, 2012a). Furthermore, due to her objectivist personal epistemology, Isabella does not rely on the analysis of evidence to support her processing of information to support inclusion, and will implement teaching strategies without theoretical or practical evidence to support them.

In addition, Isabella's subjectivist stance appears to be related to a trial and error approach to her pedagogies pertaining to inclusion, which then enables her to process information and reflect on the practices that she implements. It also permits her to be open to the opinions of others when deciding on pedagogies to support inclusion. This openness to others' opinions, as well as the focus on behaviour management, appears to be connected to her interpersonal relationships with children with diverse needs, their families, and colleagues. Additionally,

Isabella's ability to be open to others' opinions appears to help her develop honest and trusting interpersonal relationships, which may be linked to her subjectivist stance and shows evidence of entering *the crossroads* phase of self-authorship in the interpersonal dimension (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004).

Finally, although Isabella has developed some personal beliefs about inclusion and pedagogies, evidence of her *following external formulas* is visible in her intrapersonal dimension. It seems that she is strongly guided by her centre philosophy and more experienced colleagues to help validate her decision making and practices. Nevertheless, her movement towards a more internally defined sense of self provides her with the confidence in her abilities as an early childhood educator when supporting the inclusion of children with diverse needs. The following section will address Jane's meaning making for inclusion.

Jane's Meaning Making for Inclusion

At the time of her participation in this research project, Jane held a three-year bachelor degree and was studying for her masters in education. She was also working as the kindergarten teacher and held the position of the educational leader within the early childhood service. The educational leader role is a national requirement under Australia's ECEC NQF and is a part of Quality Area 7 - *Leadership and Service Management* in the NQS (ACECQA, 2014). Jane had been employed at the service for approximately two years, and had been working in ECEC for over 25 years.

This profile shows how Jane makes meaning of her experiences with the inclusion of children with diverse needs through the theoretical framework of self-authorship. Selected quotes from her five transcribed interviews (Self-authorship, Scenario, and Stimulated Recall) and documented observations of her daily pedagogies will be used to describe and discuss the personal epistemology, interpersonal and intrapersonal dimensions that inform her

meaning making of experiences with the inclusion of children with diverse needs. They will also be used to highlight Jane's beliefs about the inclusion of children with diverse needs and the pedagogical practices that she implemented to support their inclusion. Jane always appeared relaxed during the interviews and observations, and openly reflected on her experiences of the inclusion of children with diverse need, their families and her colleagues. Interviews were carried out in the Centre Director's office at various times that were convenient for Jane and the centre.

Personal epistemology dimension. The following section addresses Jane's personal epistemology in the context of how she makes meaning of knowledge claims when supporting the inclusion of children with diverse needs. Data analysis of the individual interviews revealed that she appears to hold an overall subjectivist personal epistemology that is underpinned by practical reflection. Individuals holding a subjectivist personal epistemology view knowledge as mainly instinctive, based on feelings, and not requiring practical or theoretical evidence to support the construction of knowledge (Brownlee et al., 2010). They recognise a variety of viewpoints but accept all opinions as equally valid and so do not need to be evaluated (Hofer, 2008). However, there is also some evidence in the interviews to suggest she also engages in some evaluativistic thinking when making meaning of her knowledge. Individuals holding evaluativistic beliefs are more likely to view knowledge as uncertain and constructed through a process of evaluating competing claims (Kuhn, Chaney & Weinstock, 2000). This means that many perspectives are evaluated and justified in the process of constructing meaning rather than simply accepting knowledge from an external source (objectivists beliefs) or reflecting on one's own perspectives (subjectivist beliefs). Confirmation of Jane's subjectivist personal epistemology will be discussed next followed by evidence of her emerging evaluativistic thinking.

Subjectivist personal epistemology. Jane's subjectivist beliefs are evident in the quote below when asked to extend on why she believed there are no right answers in early childhood inclusion.

In response to that question there is no right or wrong within inclusion and it really, ideally comes down to that individual and what's going to work best. You know strategies that I would of implemented when I first started, when I first started doing compic or boardmaker maybe wouldn't of work now. Everything changes all the time

and it ideally it just depends on what's going to work best for that child at that time and even it might be a strategy that you implemented yesterday and it's not going to work today, you need to quickly implement another one because that's the way it is because you know as we've said many times as educators there's no magic wand, there is no, you know this is going to work and this is going to make everything go away, it's going to solve every problem and it doesn't. It might for a couple of days, you might be going "Wow, this is it. This strategy that I've implemented is going really well" and the next day it's going yes straight out the window so and then you have to review and reflect and going "Well why and how can I tweak it to make it better?" and I think us as educators always trying to make things better and improve on our practices. (Self-Authorship Interview, 16th March 2015).

In this quote, Jane does not talk about evaluating different perspectives (including theoretical perspectives/evidence) to construct knowledge regarding the inclusion of children with diverse needs. Instead, she describes making decisions regarding the successful implementation of strategies based on the individual child she is supporting. She appears to draw upon her own subjective beliefs about what works and what does not work. This suggests a process of practical reflection as she describes implementing a strategy and then reflecting on its success rather than engaging in the evaluation of competing ideas. Jane's practical reflection supports a subjectivist personal epistemology, as there is no evidence that she critically evaluates or compares multiple perspectives.

A subjectivist personal epistemology is also evident below where Jane describes how she decides if information that she has sourced to support the inclusion of children with diverse requires adaptation. The following quote suggests that Jane is guided by her own experiences and knowledge of the children that she is supporting which is typical of

subjectivist beliefs. Her comment *after years of experience you just know on your feet what's going to work with the children and what's not* may also indicate a sense of knowing through her own intuition.

I guess after years of experience you just know on your feet what's going to work with the children and what's not, by knowing the children and understanding the children and their needs does that make sense? Yeah, so, with adapting it I guess in [Child's] instance like you know we tried visuals but they were so small we wanted to enlarge them we knew the small ones wouldn't work. But also maybe giving her a space where she comes up the front of the room and she's more engaged with the visuals, things like that. But also modifying things, ah like if it is for a speech or language delay you know you might modify the story to take out some of the text, to simplify it because you know the child and what's going to work best (Stimulated Recall Interview, 11th March 2015).

From this quote, Jane's process of practical reflection is highlighted as she talks about reflecting on the success of a teaching strategy, adopting what appears to be a trial and error approach. Her decision to adapt or modify a teaching strategy does not appear to be supported by any evaluation of multiple practical or theoretical sources of evidence, demonstrating her subjectivist beliefs. The quote below further highlights that when seeking out the opinions and perspectives of others to support the inclusion of children with diverse needs Jane would engage in reflection using her own knowledge of the child and her context to determine what strategies she would implement. It also begins to reveal the intertwined nature of the epistemological and interpersonal dimensions, as it is evident that Jane appears to be open to other perspectives through her respectful interactions with others.

For instance like other educators that have worked with children with similar diagnosis I would take on board you know what they're saying and even maybe they would come along with some different strategies that I have never even thought of. I would maybe go away and then reflect on how that would impact on the whole children in the group and also [Child] herself and if I was using it for any other individual child too how that would impact on their learning and also the team, also myself and [Educator], and how that would reflect on [Centre] them as a as a whole (Self-authorship Interview, 16th March 2015).

This quote suggests that Jane is open to the opinions and perspectives of her colleagues, and will reflect on these to help clarify the validity of her decisions to support the inclusion of children with diverse needs. Her openness to the opinions of others and her practical reflective approach is apparent in the quote below when she describes how she reflects on inclusive pedagogies provided to her by an external support person. In addition, her comment also demonstrates her decision making process where she uses her knowledge of the children she is supporting and her context to determine what strategies are to be implemented.

We had a visit from early intervention and they raised the idea of board maker and I am thinking how silly I was not to think of it. Yes, so we sourced it from them but they were using it, the way they showed us it was, they were using it quite firmly, so it wasn't really what I would or how I would use it. So we've taken their idea but we've implemented it to suit our room and to suit the children and to suit the educators, and also [Child's] family in particular (Self-authorship Interview, 16th March 2015).

This quote reveals that although Jane will seek knowledge from external experts, she is not bound by it. Her explanation that she would not implement the strategy in the way that the

early intervention person was using it also illustrates the interconnectedness of her personal epistemology and intrapersonal dimensions. It indicates that she is developing the ability to listen to her internal voice in order to make decisions about the implementation of strategies to support children with diverse needs.

Jane's use of practical reflection regarding pedagogies to support the inclusion of a child with diverse needs sometimes reflects a trial and error approach and is evident in the following comments made during a stimulated interview.

We had had a visit from early intervention, two days previously to that and they were talking about implementing some board maker pictures that would maybe make that routine flow a bit easier. So we thought we'd try, you know, to see how it went, and that we actually gave the card to [Child] so she could take it around and show people what we were asking them to do. So when we were ringing the bell, she was ringing the bell and she was taking the picture around too to show that we were going inside and wash our hands. So, and it worked really well. I was really happy with that but it was also, it was able to not isolate [Child], but she was actually empowered to do it, so, and then all the other children were taking on what [Child] was saying, so it really flowed smoothly for all the children, not just for [Child] (Stimulated Interview, 2nd March 2015).

This quote indicates that Jane will implement a teaching strategy and then reflect on the effectiveness of it, reinforcing the practical reflective nature of her subjectivist beliefs. It also illuminates an interpersonal strength as Jane appears to facilitate that child's participation and interactions with others.

Emerging evaluativist personal epistemology. Although it appears that Jane holds subjectivist personal epistemological beliefs, the interview data suggest she also holds some

evaluativistic beliefs when making meaning. When asked how she uses other people's opinions about the inclusion of children with diverse needs, it seems from her comment below that she adopts a practical evaluativistic personal epistemology when trusting the opinions of others and when also accepting knowledge to justify her decision making and pedagogies. Unlike practical reflection, a practical evaluativistic personal epistemology involves ones' ability to be able to evaluate multiple strategies and perspectives, and analyse practices instead of theoretical ideas (Brownlee et al., 2010; Edwards, 2014).

Sometimes I take on board too and go past that respect and that acknowledgement and maybe use some of these strategies as well, but I'd be looking for maybe evidence of where it's worked and wanting to know, and I'd ask them a few questions going you know "What was the, what was umm, what transpired when that strategy worked?" you know "What was the set up? What was the room?" and things like that. But also I guess respecting and acknowledging but maybe seeking more information elsewhere like going "Is it a common umm thing that this person's talking about?" If it's a strategy or their beliefs or something maybe just do a bit more research and see if there is evidence of their views or things (Self-Authorship Interview, 16th March 2015).

This quote illustrates that although Jane is aware of the opinions and perspectives of others about the inclusion of children with diverse needs, she will look for evidence when weighing up different strategies from a variety of sources before coming to her own informed opinion about which pedagogies she will implement to support children with diverse needs.

Jane's emerging evaluativistic personal epistemology can be seen also in her comment below when she was asked if she thought anyone's opinion is as good as another's.

It is evident that Jane holds a strong belief that everyone has the right to have an opinion and that these should be acknowledged and respected but not necessarily accepted.

I think as I've said to you before I think everyone deserves a right to be heard, and everyone deserves the right to have their beliefs, I guess acknowledged and respected but we don't have to agree with them that's the difference (Self-authorship Interview, 16th March 2015).

From this comment, it is clear that she is open to the opinions of others, but does not think that they are all suitable when implementing the inclusion of children with diverse needs.

Evidence of Jane's emerging evaluativistic personal epistemology is further validated in the following comment, as she talks about how she would gain more knowledge or sources of information to support a child with diverse needs highlighted in her scenario interview.

I'd be looking for services who actually support children with autism, and also inclusion support, reading books of course, research, but looking for things that have worked, not just saying "hey this might work" but actually reading and resourcing things on the internet or other services and strategies and other network services. Like I said, inclusion support that they go "these strategies have worked" they've shown they've worked and they're not intrusive to the child too so maybe we could we could do that, so I'd look elsewhere too and see what what's out there, and also too talking to the other educators who have worked with that child as well (Scenario Interview, 16th March 2015).

This quote reveals that Jane will look for and consider various sources to support the inclusion of children with diverse needs. However, there is no evidence in her comment about how she evaluates ideas and comes to her own informed opinion about what strategies she

can implement. The following section addresses Jane's interpersonal dimension and her relationships with others through analysis of the interviews and observational data.

Interpersonal dimension.

The following section considers Jane's interpersonal relationships with others. It has become apparent in Jane's interpretation of her experiences of the inclusion of children with diverse needs and in the documented observations that her interactions with others involved four types of interpersonal relationships. These included relationships with families of children with diverse needs, colleagues, children with diverse needs, and external professional supports.

Families of children with diverse needs. Within the context of her relationships and interactions with families, Jane emphasised the importance of establishing strong, friendly, respectful, and nonjudgmental relationships, which then enable her to engage in open and honest communication. This is evident in her response below when Jane was asked about the important skills needed to build relationships with families.

So I think you need to have that nonjudgmental, respect and those open communications with parents so you can you know have a chat at the end of the day and you greet them with a smile and they're happy to come in and see you and meet you and you know then they feel that they have that relationship with you, they go "Hey Jane can I talk to you about something?", and then it might be something a lot harder to deal with so, but they know they're supported by me and that that they're comforted and that I have that respect for them that that's where that you know that conversation will stay or I can help them (Self-authorship Interview, 16th March, 2015).

Jane's comment seems to indicate that her interpersonal relationships with families enable her to communicate and exchange information that will help her work through any issues that may arise. This comment also shows that Jane values the opinions of others (subjectivism), reinforcing the strong relationship between her interpersonal and personal epistemological dimensions. The quote below further validates how Jane views strong relationships with families as a way for her to engage in difficult conversations regarding children's needs.

I think in regards to [Child] when she first came into the room I had only known [Parent] for a very short period before in from the other room and it was just a "Hi" greet in the morning or the afternoon, so I really wanted to focus on building you know a deep, a really good strong relationship with [Parent] so I was able to have that that talk with her to say you know "I do have concerns. You know I've got these observations here and I have observed [Child] in this and I think there might be something there we might need to look at". So, by having those relationships you are able to talk about the hard things with parents and yes sometimes parents aren't you know as we know they're not very happy to know their child you know does need a bit of extra help or that there might be something that might need investigating or you know they might have ongoing problems or something, and but sometimes if you have those good relationships, parents are a bit more open to it too, so, and you've set the ground work, you know you've had those little conversations too before like I would say things to [Parent] "You know she did this and this and this today. Does she do that at home?" and she might go "Yeah that that was a bit odd wasn't it". So we've had those little conversations too before so yeah. But I think it's vital (Self-authorship Interview, 16th March 2015).

It is evident in this quote that Jane has confidence in her relationship with the parent and feels safe to share her opinions and concerns. It also shows that she has developed an awareness of the importance of communicating with families of children with diverse needs that goes beyond simple greetings. Her confidence with delivering information to the parent may also be an indication of her intrapersonal strength and commitment to inclusion as she states that she is willing to share information, even though the parent may not be happy to hear it.

The observation below provides further evidence of Jane's capacity to engage with parents' perspectives in a respectful and open way.

During the morning indoor session, Jane approached a parent and began talking about a new strategy that she was thinking about introducing for [Child] to help motivate her participation in planned learning experiences. Jane explained that it involved using a first and then approach for [Child]. [Child] would first be asked to participate in a planned, teacher lead experience, and once completed, [Child] could then self-select an experience. After explaining the strategy, Jane then asked the parent what she thought. The parent shared her excitement about this, and highlighted that she was using a similar approach at home. Jane then asked if the approach was working. The parent said that last night she had used it successfully to get [Child] to have a bath. Jane then said to the parent that she would like to try this strategy for the next two weeks and asked if they could meet up in a week's time to see how things are going with the strategy. The parent said that this was a great idea (Observational Field Notes, 24th February 2015).

This observation illustrates Jane's respect for the parent. It also again highlights the importance of her open and honest relationships with families to ensure that they are willing to share their ideas and thoughts about teaching strategies to support the inclusion and

development of their child. This reinforces the clear link between Jane's interpersonal and personal epistemology dimensions, as it shows that she has the ability to actively listen to, assess, and evaluate a variety of opinions in order to implement effective teaching strategies to support the inclusion of children with diverse needs. Her ability to listen to, assess, and evaluate the parent's perspective links strongly to her progression towards an evaluativistic personal epistemology. Additionally, this observation shows Jane's collaborative relationship with families.

Centre colleagues. The open and honest communication and valuing of other perspectives with families of children with diverse needs was also evident in her relationships with colleagues. This is evident in her comment below when asked about the important skills needed in early childhood education and care to build relationships with colleagues.

I think having an open and honest communication, like you need to be able to, you don't have to be best friends but it, like to build that relationship though you have to be honest, you have to be professional, you have to show respect, you have to acknowledge that they have different views and opinions on everything that that's entailed in childcare not just, not just inclusion but everything (Self-authorship Interview, 16th March 2015).

This comment discloses that Jane's interactions with her colleagues are about accessing a variety of opinions to support her knowledge regarding pedagogies. Her statement *you have to acknowledge that they have different views and opinions* again shows the interconnectedness of her interpersonal and personal epistemological beliefs as it illustrates her openness to her colleagues perspectives through her interactions with them. However, while she appears to respect their views and opinions, there is no evidence in her comment of how she uses or processes them.

When asked about the important skills needed to build those relationships with her colleagues, Jane describes how she aspires to develop relationships based on mutual respect that are supportive in nature.

Mutual respect, but also supporting them like with their ideas and like I say to [Colleague] going cause she goes “Can I try this today?” and I’m going “Sure let’s try it, see if it works, and then we can reflect on it a bit”. Like just setting up an experience not maybe a big strategy I should say. Putting an experience, helping the children, and then we can reflect on it going “Well did it work? Great, if so can we change it? Can we improve it? Can we offer it to the children in a different way so they experience it in a different way in a different view?” but also too, giving [Colleague] and empowering [Colleague] to have, to be able to have the confidence to do things like that and then reflect going “Well if it didn’t work why? And how can we adjust it so it does work so all the children can access that experience?” (Self-authorship Interview, 16th March 2015).

Jane’s comment expresses the reflective nature of her interpersonal relationships with her colleagues. It also provides further evidence of Jane’s practical evaluativistic personal epistemology, as it suggests that she evaluates the pedagogies of her colleague, reinforcing the interconnectedness of her personal epistemology and her interpersonal dimensions. However, the comment also suggests a perceived hierarchy between her and her colleague. It appears that the colleague asks for Jane’s permission to introduce a teaching strategy and that the decision to implement it is made by Jane. This may be indicative of the centre roles that they both were fulfilling at the time of the study. The apparent hierarchy in her relationship with a colleague is also suggested in the following comment made during a stimulated recall interview that was based on an observation.

I don't know if you noticed the noise level was getting quite loud and we were trying to pack up and get ready to sit on the mat and clean our room. I noticed [Colleague] was cleaning the table. There was some other children and their behaviour was escalating a bit and needed a bit of direction, and I was trying to already direct some children on the mat. So I needed a bit of help. So I was asking [Colleague] to come away from cleaning, to come back into the group and help, because it wasn't an appropriate time for her to do that task at that time, but also too, knowing that I am stepping away from the kindy room now and we have just put into place the comp, the boardmakers and the visuals for all the children, and because [Child] was needing a bit of help coming to sit on the mat, and I thought I need to empower [Colleague]. I had previously made a few little observations that she wasn't being, she wasn't following through with the boardmaker as much as I would like and we have had lots of conversations but I knew it was new to [Colleague] too so I wanted her to be empowered so she could use that while I'm still here. So I just quickly asked [Colleague], I showed her the visuals I said "Can you follow through with this, I need to go help these children here" (Stimulated Recall Interview, 16th March 2015).

This quote may indicate that due to Jane's role as a Group Leader she does not rely on the relationship with her Teaching Assistant colleague to help validate her decisions regarding the implementation of strategies to support the inclusion of children with diverse needs. Although it appears that Jane's communication and interaction with her colleague was one-way, and involved giving directions without mutual collaboration, it could be interpreted that she was adopting a respectful leadership role in her interactions. This involved her trying to mentor and empower her colleague regarding the implementation of the pedagogy, also suggesting that she values her. This interpersonal strategy with her colleague seems to help her coordinate the enactment of inclusion of children with diverse needs in her room.

Children with diverse needs. The importance of respect in her relationships with families of children with diverse needs and colleagues was also a key theme to emerge from the interview data that addressed her relationships with children with diverse needs. This then appeared to enable her to help them to feel safe and secure in their relationship with her. This is evident in the following quote when Jane was asked about the skills needed to build relationships with children in her room.

When we talk about as educators and when I've spoken to Cert 3 educators when they come in you know I talk about getting on the ground level, making eye contact and having your face lit up and smile when you talk about their painting and showing them that they have that sense of belonging and that they are, they are valued as children too. So I think we need to work really hard to build those relationships with children so then they feel that sense of belonging, they feel that safe, secure environment where they can go and say "Hey Jane", you know, they can say anything, you know "I'm tired, I need a cuddle" and you know that's great that they think that I'm approachable, that they can come up and say "I need a cuddle" (Self-authorship Interview, 16th March 2015).

This quote displays Jane's awareness of herself concerning her interactions with children as she reflects about the importance of body language when interacting with children. It is clear that she values the practice of getting down to children's level, making eye contact, and smiling as a way to create a safe and secure relationship with them. However, unlike her relationships with colleagues, there is no evidence in Jane's comment that she engages in mutual discussions, which value the perspectives of children.

Jane's comment below provides further evidence of her awareness of herself during interactions with children with diverse needs. It also indicates that she adopts a facilitator role with them to ensure that they are fully included into the daily program.

In regards to the spider, we had played a game before when we first introduced the mat, the bug mat with the 24 different bugs on it. I purposefully put [Child's] right at the front so I could then continuously remind her or just try and encourage her to come back, so that spider, it's hers and that's why you know I keep saying "on the spider" and there's only one spider and it's the biggest one there. I wanted her to be part of that that group (Stimulated Recall Interview, 16th March 2015).

In this quote, although Jane's facilitator role in her relationship with the child provides opportunities for the child to be included into group times, it appears that this interaction is teacher directed and does not provide evidence of the child's perspective being valued and or respected. However, her implementation of the bug mat to help encourage and support the child's participation during a planned group time is evidence of her enactment of inclusion and a key element of high quality ECEC inclusion (De Vore & Russell, 2007).

The following quote from Jane's reflections during a stimulated recall interview of a field note observation reinforces that she has developed the ability to understand the individual needs of children with diverse needs so that she can establish respectful relationships with them.

If she is not really excited about the group or is not wanting to participate she has the option, so she can go and play somewhere else but I knew that she would really enjoy it cause we have read one book very similar to that and she really enjoyed it so I was hoping that she we would really, if she had that chance to be involved in that book

that she would really enjoy that experience (Stimulated Recall Interview, 18th March 2015).

This quote reveals that, as well as respecting the individual needs of a child, Jane provides choice and independence in her relationship, and ensures that the child gains enjoyment from their interactions with her. Additionally it might suggest that she values what the child has to contribute to their relationship and interactions.

External early childhood professionals. The fourth and final relationship identified in Jane's interview data is external early childhood professional supports such as early intervention services and bi-cultural support. The following quote suggests that Jane values a good collaborative relationship with these as this then enables her to access new information, resources and strategies to support the inclusion of children with diverse needs.

We had a fantastic support network from early intervention in NSW and they were phenomenal. They came in and they gave us strategies, different strategies that we could try and implement and see what worked best in our service (Self-authorship Interview, 16th March 2015).

The comment above illustrates Jane's confidence and trust in the early intervention's support and strategies to enact the inclusion of children with diverse needs. Her comment *they came in and they gave us strategies* may also suggest that these relationships are based on the experts telling her what strategies to implement, and her then testing them to see which one works. This again illustrates Jane's practical reflective approach that is underpinned by trial and error of her pedagogies.

The following quote demonstrates the importance of Jane's collaborative relationship with external early childhood professionals, and how these support her to communicate and include children with diverse needs.

We actually had a lovely person that came down and worked from Grafton so it was a 40 minute trip but she would come down and she would help translate and we would then set up experiences so this child could be included just as much as all the other children so and it was lovely and he flourished, he really did because first off he was really I would say like insecure because not knowing and not being able to speak the language and not communicating and things like that, so he was quite upset so his days only, we staggered the time that he came for with the bicultural support person from Grafton and then we built up his days and then by the end he came running in and he was calling us by names and all his friends by names and you know learning English of course which they do so quickly when they are in that environment (Scenario Interview, 16th March 2015).

This quote highlights the benefits of her collaborative relationships with early childhood professionals, and how these can then enrich her interpersonal strategies with children with diverse needs. It is evident that her interactions with the bicultural support worker seemed to empower her to successfully support the inclusion of a child with diverse needs. The following section investigates the role of the intrapersonal dimension in Jane's meaning making for inclusion.

Intrapersonal dimension. This section explores Jane's sense of self and how this is used to interpret and guide her enactment of the inclusion of children with diverse needs. Throughout the interviews, Jane describes a strong and internally defined sense of self and professional identity about the inclusion of children with diverse needs. This is evident in the

following quote where Jane reflects on a negative experience with an external early childhood expert who she encountered while supporting the inclusion of a child with diverse needs.

We had a lady come in to observe, who we'd asked for some help. This person come in was very hands on, restricting like [Child's] movement so much that [Child] scratched herself down the face, was pulling her hair, was getting so worked up, red in the face, and I was trying to do a group time and she was sitting right in front of me and I was, arrgh, literally I was just trying to maintain the group, that's what I was trying to focus on because I was getting to the point where I was just going to go "stop, enough is enough" and cry because it does go against my beliefs, it goes against everything I've done for the last 29 years in childcare and I haven't witnessed things like that before. So, I went to [Colleague] afterwards and I said "[Colleague] this is wrong". I said you know "I don't want her coming in, this goes against our philosophy. This goes against everything that [Colleague], my assistant and I believe in as educators. This goes against everything that we know that [Child's] mum would not be happy with it as well". We spoke to her the next day and said "We welcome your ideas and your strategies to put in place into the room for inclusion for all the children and best practice, and what's going to work but we don't welcome your hands on. So we had to make that front and stand up and go "no", cause I'm there to stand up for [Child's] rights when mum signs her in at the beginning of the day. I take her on as my child and that's you know, I'm then there to protect her and to care for her and you know help her on her educational journey (Scenario Interview, 16th March 2015).

It is evident from the comments that her internally defined sense of self as an early childhood educator is to stand up for the rights of children with diverse needs. In addition, it shows that she has the confidence and independence to challenge the practices and opinions of experts when a child's safety is compromised or when she views a teaching practice that does not match her values or beliefs. The above comment *this goes against everything that [Colleague], my assistant and I believe in as educators. This goes against everything that we know that [Child's] mum would not be happy with it as well* indicates that she reflects on other perspectives, although it appears she does not rely solely on them to guide her pedagogies when supporting children with diverse needs. However, there is no evidence in her comments that she reflects on research or theory.

The quote below demonstrates Jane's confidence in her internally defined sense of self and professional identity as she will challenge others when confronted by a situation where her beliefs about the inclusion of a child with diverse needs are not supported by a colleague.

Some of the other educators were a bit going, oh actually one educator was quite rude and said "Get rid of him, you shouldn't". Yeah so I was going "No no no, that's not what we're about, every child deserves, has the right to learn, to succeed, and to feel that sense of belonging". So we, ah (Centre Director] and I sat down with this educator and explained "This is, this our philosophy, and this is what it reflects, and this is how we need to you know, support this child, and this family too, this is what we're about, this is what our service is here for" (Self-authorship Interview, 16th March 2015).

This quote indicates that Jane has trust in her internal sense of self and professional identity when supporting children with diverse needs, which enables her to challenge others. It may

also imply that she is not effected by their negative beliefs and attitudes. However, Jane's quote does suggest that her intrapersonal identity is somewhat connected to her interpersonal relationship with her colleague. As also identified within her interpersonal section, it appears that Jane is confident to engage in dialogue or collaboration with others when enacting the inclusion of children with diverse needs.

The comment below illustrates that Jane has also developed confidence in her professional abilities to support the inclusion of children with diverse needs.

Like for [Child] for instance, like cause' people are going you know a bit uncertain on how to handle situations, whereas I come across as a bit more confident I guess you would say because I have those skills and I have that, have had that experience in the past working with that those services and other educators and practices that have worked (Self-authorship Interview, 16th March 2015).

It is evident in Jane's comment that her confidence in her abilities may be attributed to her past interactions with others and experiences of practices that have been successful. Her confidence in her professional identity and ability to support the inclusion of children with diverse needs is again evident in her response below made during the scenario interview when she was questioned about what she would do in a particular situation.

I would actually go up and umm, have that chat with the first educator that was restraining the child and going "you know well maybe you know, different strategies work for different children, maybe this strategy doesn't work for this child, seeing it took him 40 minutes to calm down. Umm maybe we can try some different strategies to see if they do work better" (Scenario Interview, 16th March 2015).

This response suggests that Jane has developed the capacity to enact her professional beliefs as an early childhood educator. Her quote *maybe we can try some different strategies to see if they do work better* again reinforces her trial and error approach to the implementation of teaching strategies to support the inclusion of children with diverse needs that has been identified within her personal epistemology dimension.

The comment below continues to explore Jane's intrapersonal dimension as it shares her satisfaction at having been able to mentor and help her colleagues regarding their pedagogies, and how this contributes to her sense of self-worth and professional identity.

I think my teaching practice changes constantly over the time and it you know it's ongoing, it's like a working document I guess it's always changing and always because of every experience that I have throughout, so whether it be like the conversation with [Colleague] you know and then I've gone "Wow" and you know and then my self-worth I'm thinking "Wow I do have something to offer. I do you know and I do a good job at you know mentoring and helping other staff looking at their pedagogy and their practices and everything like that" and I go "Wow" (Self-authorship Interview, 16th March 2015).

The above comment highlights how Jane's success as mentor to her colleagues could be linked to her confidence as an early childhood educator. Jane's self-confidence in her professional abilities appears to be supporting her independent, internally defined sense of self and professional identity. It also shows the evolving nature of her pedagogies and that she values opportunities for professional growth.

When asked about what early childhood inclusion actually means to her, Jane commented that she has developed strong personal beliefs about inclusion that go beyond only referring to children with diverse needs.

Even the word inclusion like I think a lot of people, when they say or hear inclusion they think about children with special needs. I see inclusion is that every child has the support and the ability to access the learning the same. So they might access it differently sorry but they all have the chance to learn. So it's about including every child (Self-authorship Interview, 16th March 2015).

Here Jane stresses the importance that she places on pedagogies that cater for the individual needs of all children and that support their access and learning. This reinforces her interpersonal ability with children with diverse needs that appears to enable her to understand their individual needs so that she can establish respectful relationships with them.

Jane continues to discuss her sense of self and professional identity in the comment below. Here she indicates that her sense of self and professional identity is also intertwined with her interactions with colleagues.

So I see myself as competent and also knowledgeable too because even here some of the girls, and [Colleague] who [laughs] who when I first started here we went head to head ah a few times and she even you know said that the other day and she said "Even though we've gone head to head" she said "I'm so much a better educator because of having her time with me over the last 2 years" and I went "That's great" (Self-authorship Interview, 16th March 2015).

It is evident from her comment above that she views herself as a competent and knowledgeable early childhood educator, and that this is acknowledged and respected by her colleague. Jane's comment also could be interpreted as suggesting that at times she experiences conflict between her desire to deliver her values and beliefs that do not match those of her colleagues.

Section Summary

The framework of self-authorship and its three dimensions of personal epistemology, interpersonal, and intrapersonal, has helped to explore Jane's meaning making for inclusion and has highlighted the processes she uses to make sense of her experiences of the inclusion of children with diverse needs. It has also illustrated her ability to support inclusion within the ECEC service and highlighted her pedagogies and beliefs. Looking again at Baxter Magolda's (2001) three phases in the development towards self-authorship it would seem that Jane could be described as being at *the crossroads* of self-authorship. This is because it is evident that she is beginning to rely more on her internal voice to make decisions about the inclusion of children with diverse needs, while also understanding how she is processing and being guided by others' opinions (Baxter Magolda & King, 2012a).

It also appears that her subjectivist stance that is underpinned by practical reflection and her emerging evaluativist thinking permits her to be open to multiple perspectives within her centre context. Jane's ability to be open to multiple perspectives seems to enable her to construct her own knowledge about inclusion and pedagogies that then helps guide her decision-making and enactment of teaching strategies. It also reinforces that she is at *the crossroads* phase of self-authorship as the ability to be open to multiple perspectives is a key aspect of this phase (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). Subsequently Jane's openness to the perspectives of others appears to support her in establishing open and respectful interpersonal relationships with children with diverse needs, their families, colleagues, and external professional supports. This then helps her to communicate and exchange information that aids her enactment of pedagogies, as well as being able to cater for the individual needs of children with diverse needs.

In addition, further confirmation that Jane is at *the crossroads* phase is evident in her intrapersonal dimension as she seems to have developed an internally defined sense of self and

professional identity about the inclusion of children with diverse needs. This then appears to allow her to reflect on the interconnected nature of her own beliefs and professional identity on her pedagogies and interactions with others. Her apparent internally defined sense of self and professional identity also seems to then give her the confidence and independence to challenge the practices and opinions of others if the teaching practice does not match her values or beliefs. The following section will address Sophie's meaning making for inclusion.

Sophie's Meaning Making for Inclusion

The final case in this study is Sophie who was the centre director of the ECEC service. At the time of the study, she held a Bachelor of Early Childhood Education and a Masters of Learning Innovation. She had also commenced a PhD in early childhood education, however had not completed it at the time of the study. She had been at the service since its commencement as an ECEC service, and had been working in ECEC for over 10 years.

Through the theoretical framework of self-authorship and its three dimensions, Sophie's meaning making with regard to the inclusion of children with diverse needs is discussed. A selection of responses from her five transcribed interviews (Self-authorship, Scenario, and Stimulated Recall) and documented observations of her daily pedagogies will be used to describe and discuss the personal epistemology, interpersonal and intrapersonal dimensions that inform her meaning making of experiences with the inclusion of children with diverse needs. They will also be used to highlight her beliefs about the inclusion of children with diverse needs and the pedagogical practices that she enacted to support their inclusion. Sophie always appeared relaxed and confident during the interviews and observations, and willingly reflected on her experiences of the inclusion of children with diverse needs, their families and her colleagues. Interviews were carried out in her office at various times that were convenient for her and the centre.

Personal epistemology dimension. This section explores Sophie's personal epistemology and how she makes meaning of knowledge claims and processes information when enacting the inclusion of children with diverse needs. The analysis of her individual interviews and observations signified that although there was some evidence of subjectivist thinking, it is strongly suggested that she predominately uses an evaluativistic personal epistemology to help with her meaning making of experiences. This also includes evidence of a collaborative evaluativistic stance with others. Sophie appears to use her own beliefs to constitute knowledge and validate it, which is suggestive of a subjectivist personal epistemology. However, unlike the previous participant Jane, it is also clear that Sophie evaluates and validates the opinions of others based on theoretical perspectives and experiences, which is indicative of evaluativistic thinking.

Evaluativistic personal epistemology. Sophie's evaluativistic belief is evident in the following quote that shows evidence that she uses her own personal beliefs about inclusion as a way to help her reflect on and trial different teaching strategies from multiple sources. Here she talks about comparing her beliefs and actions to what others are saying.

I am comparing my personal beliefs and my actions as an educator to what they're saying. So when I'm actually in the moment listening to that other educator or a specialist giving me their opinion on how they would deal with a similar situation, I constantly tick almost a checklist against "Yes I did that. Yes, I did that or I would never do that or that's interesting and I may choose to do that next time" and I almost find myself validating their opinion ah to whether it resonated with me or not. At the same time if I had an external person provide me their input into a similar situation I may choose to take it with a grain of salt if I didn't feel that it resonated with my own beliefs because it wasn't a way that I felt, I can't engage with if it's not something that

I believe in. So while they might offer a suggestion, if that's not who I am, I can't engage in that practice (Stimulated Recall Interview, 14th May 2015).

From this quote, it seems that Sophie has the capacity to access a variety of perspectives to help her with exploring pedagogies to support the inclusion of children with diverse needs. Sophie's comment, *I constantly tick almost a checklist*, may indicate that she evaluates the opinions of others. It also suggests that she has developed beliefs regarding best practice, and considers these when looking for the most effective teaching strategies to support inclusion. It is also clear that she would not simply trust these perspectives, rather she would use her beliefs to evaluate and then validate them.

The quote below denotes that when deciding on teaching strategies to support inclusion, Sophie would trial them first and then reflect on their success using theoretical evidence. Based on this reflection it would seem that she then is able to validate and justify her decision to continue to implement the strategy and also gain evidence of the success of the strategy that can then be shared with others, illustrating an evaluativist level of thinking.

I would probably apply it to a situation and trial some of, perhaps, if there was something along the lines of strategies. It might be something where, if the documentation suggested using visual cues for a child with ASD, that perhaps even though I was the assistant in the room, I could make those up and, with respect to the lead teacher, say, "Oh, we just did some reading and this was an opportunity that I thought I could just bring along and see if that child responds". Where it's not taking away from that lead teacher, not causing conflict but at the same time trying on some strategies that had been investigated and then that also gives you more foundation to then be able to go to that lead teacher and go, "I've had some really positive results from this. Perhaps we could implement it further (Scenario Interview, 21st May 2015).

This quote suggests that Sophie would take into account theoretical perspectives to help with validating her decision making when testing new knowledge on supporting the inclusion of children with diverse needs. Her response to the scenario also indicates that she has the confidence and independence to use her initiative to make her own decisions about the implementation of teaching strategies, even if there is a risk of conflict with her colleagues.

Additional evidence of Sophie's evaluativism personal epistemology is expressed in the quote below where she highlights that there is no one correct way when supporting the inclusion of children with diverse needs.

There's no one correct way, because every child is different, and every situation is different, every family and every diverse need, whether that's a diagnosis or a behavioural will be different. But in saying that, I do feel that there are right ways about going, to go about things. And that there's a level of appropriateness in engaging with children (Self-authorship Interview, 21st May 2015).

This suggests that Sophie believes there can be no right answers when supporting the inclusion of children with diverse needs because they are all different. Sophie's comment that there are right ways to go about things may also indicate that she needs information to help her to decide on the right teaching strategy for a particular child, family or situation. The following quote provides further evidence of her evaluativistic personal epistemology as it appears she uses her personal beliefs to help evaluate and validate the opinions of others.

I try to, I think, sound out more how they came to that opinion, to what gravity or depth they can make that statement. If they can bring me a journal article that says, "I read this last night and I think it's worth trying," or "I've studied this for five years and these are three strategies I would try". In saying that, there will people who are the specialists who have however many letters behind their names, who still will offer

strategies that I won't agree with, and that's personal. That's belief based not a right or wrong from an early childhood perspective (Self-authorship Interview, 21st May 2015).

Here Sophie indicates that she reflects on theory and practice to determine if she would trust the opinions of others, signifying her ability to engage in evaluation based on theories and experiences. It also infers that she would trial a teaching strategy provided to her by others if it matched her own personal beliefs.

Sophie continues to show evidence of her evaluativism stance when questioned during her self-authorship interview if she thought anybody's opinion about pedagogies in early childhood inclusion is as good as another's,

Everyone has a valid opinion, yes. Whether they hold an early childhood qualification, are considered a specialist in the area, are a mum, or a child themselves. How often do we ask the kids, you know? I think everyone has a valid opinion, it's how those culminate and which aspects of them we take to boot to form a successful strategy. Everyone's entitled to their opinion (Self-authorship Interview, 21st May 2015).

This quote highlights that she has developed the capacity to recognise a variety of opinions regarding the inclusion of children with diverse needs. Although not explicit, there is also some suggestion in her comment, *it's how those culminate and which aspects of them we take to boot to form a successful strategy*, that she weighs up evidence to help construct her own understandings of knowledge to support the inclusion of children with diverse needs, indicating a evaluativistic level of thinking.

This level of evaluativistic thinking is also seen in Sophie's reflection below when

questioned about the criteria she uses to validate the opinions of others.

Experience, research, I would look to justify an opinion. What does someone make the, on what grounds does that person make that opinion? So, I might have, a mature educator, who is still only studying their Certificate 3, but has been in the industry for 25 years, come to me and say, “When I was first out, I had this experience. And I notice for the child with a similar diverse need, that these were the strategies we took on and it worked for that child. Perhaps you could try that.” I will take that on board just as much as I would from a specialist who’ve I’ve invited into the centre to give us their opinion. Because it will be what resonates with me as something that I’m, I can see myself engaging with, or I can see a positive response from a child, from trialling their suggestions, I suppose. And yeah, I think I’ll have to justify it with my own set of goals, expectations for that child (Self-authorship Interview, 21st May 2015).

This quote again indicates that she evaluates the opinions of others based on her own personal beliefs. However, it also implies that her view of knowledge may be related to research and the experience of others, and that she links these to her own beliefs, goals, and expectations for children with diverse needs when processing information to support them. Her reflection also shows that she values the opinions that are supported by research and experience. Sophie’s view of knowledge and a decision making process regarding pedagogies that is related to both research and experience is also illuminated in the comment below. Here, Sophie indicates that she draws on theoretical perspectives that have been pertinent to her as an early childhood educator, as well as the perspectives of her teaching staff.

I’d undertake a reflection with the teaching staff that were also in the room to say to the educators “This worked for these reasons, and this was my logic in doing so”. I would look to reflect on why I did so and to gain more of an insight into that perhaps

look back at the things that helped evolve my teaching as it is now, so that it's going and looking at Piaget and Vygotsky, and the 'Zone of proximal development' was, resonated with me in my studies and very much became who, helped me become a teacher I am now. Bronfenbrenner's 'Ecological Systems Theory', were all elements that formulated who, how I teach now and I think if I was to reflect and seek more information about that teaching practice I would head back to those theories and see if it resonated with those (Stimulated Recall Interview, 9th May 2015).

It is evident in Sophie's comment that she had undertaken a reflection with the teaching staff, that she has developed the ability to engage in collaborative reflection with her colleagues when making decisions about the implementation of pedagogies, reinforcing the connection between her personal epistemology and interpersonal skills. In addition, her quote indicates that she reflects on theory suggesting that the information provided to her during her reflections must match her own beliefs.

Collaborative evaluativist personal epistemology. Although it is clear that Sophie will engage in collaborative reflection with her colleagues when making decisions about the implementation of pedagogies to support the inclusion of children with diverse needs, the next quote shows evidence of a collaborative evaluativist perspective. When questioned about how she would gain more information or knowledge about the situation presented in the interview, she responded:

I would go to my resources. I would go to the team of teachers around me. So obviously I'm working with this team teacher above me, in my classroom situation. I would go to other teaching teams in the centre and say you know, "I'm observing this or this particular child in an age group is giving us some grief. I'd like to find more different strategies to use." So go to the other resources immediately available to me,

and then go up the chain a little, ah start looking at reference documents, maybe look at some text books or some journals. Maybe talk to a peak body, an organisation, reach out to someone that might be able to teach me more (Scenario Interview, 21st May 2015).

It would seem from her comments that she would access multiple perspectives when considering the most effective teaching strategies to support the inclusion of children with diverse needs. However, there is no evidence in the above that indicates how she processes them or if she engages in critical reflection through the use of theories and evidence, which might be expected in an evaluativist stance. Her comment *go up the chain* may suggest Sophie's hierarchal awareness of roles that exist within the ECEC. This quote also illustrates her ability to reflect on research as a source of knowledge when supporting the inclusion of children with diverse needs.

Subjectivist personal epistemology. As well as showing evidence of evaluativism and collaborative evaluativism, Sophie also demonstrated some subjectivist thinking. This is emphasised in the following comments made during her scenario interview.

There is not one right way of dealing with any particular child with ASD. So in this scenario, you might have three other children who also suffer from ASD and that physical closeness may work for one of those four children, but also too I think that there are a thousand strategies you could try for all different children and not every strategy is going to work for every child just because they are, come under that title of ASD (Scenario Interview, 21st May 2015).

This quote highlights her subjectivist stance that there can be no right answers in the presented scenario due to the individual differences of children with diverse needs and circumstances. It would also seem that her comment *that physical closeness may work for*

one of those four children shows that she may reflect on and consider existing strategies and how these may apply to specific individual children with ASD. The following section investigates Sophie's interpersonal meaning making in the context of her relationships and interactions with others.

Interpersonal dimension. This section investigates Sophie's interpersonal relationships in the context of her inclusion of children with diverse needs. Analysis of interview and observational data disclosed interpersonal relationships with families of children with diverse needs, colleagues, and children with diverse needs. Although external professional supports were mentioned in her interviews, there was no evidence of how she builds or maintains them.

Families of children with diverse needs. Addressing her relationships and interactions with families, Sophie stressed the importance of mutual conversations and good communication, which then permits her to share relevant information about teaching strategies. This is indicated in her response below where she shares her thoughts about why she had a conversation with a parent of a child with diverse needs.

I mean, any discussion regarding a child and their needs has to have that continuity between home and school. And whatever strategies we put in place need to also have input in place at home, and it needs to be manageable and appropriate for both settings. So, that constant line of communication with parents is vital for any success in seeing children succeed and supporting them in their developmental growth and learning. So without conversations with families, we're not going to be able to have that streamlined approach and ensure that we're looking at it from a holistic perspective (Self-authorship Interview, 21st May 2015).

The comments above highlight that Sophie values the input of families when implementing strategies as it enables a consistent approach between the home and centre, and helps her to support children's learning and development. Unlike Isabella, this indicates a strong focus on others within her interactions, instead of herself. It is also clear from her statement, *that constant line of communication with parents is vital for any success in seeing children succeed and supporting them in their developmental growth and learning*, that she has developed an awareness of the importance of working partnerships with families when supporting the inclusion of children with diverse needs. The importance of communication within her interpersonal relationships with families is reiterated in the following comments where she indicates that it is influential in maintaining a happy environment for children, families, and educators.

Communication with families centre-wide is influential to maintaining a happy environment for both child, family and educator. The gravity, I suppose of working with a family with diverse needs is that the parents themselves have diverse needs; that they have a hidden struggle often, and we as the early childhood setting sometimes are the centre of that little universe and that because we are the next person who spends the most amount of time with their child, we become a resource and sometimes a support to that parent. So having constant and open communication with those families is vital to create an environment that will help the child succeed, but only by that, you know that from the families (Self-authorship Interview, 21st May, 2015).

This comment illustrates Sophie's willingness to establish relationships with families so that she can create a learning environment that will promote success for their child. It is also visible that she has developed a strong awareness of and a respect for the individual needs of

families of children with diverse needs. What is significant in this quote is her comment *that the parents themselves have diverse needs*, as this illustrates the depth of her understanding of other perspectives and her focus on others rather than herself.

Further evidence of the support that she provides to families is seen in the response below where she talks about sharing information about a child to help reduce the stress for a parent.

I can take a short video on my phone and text it to mum in the middle of the day and saying, “Having a wonderful day.” That it’s not always about, “Oh, look. We had an issue today about this.” It was, you know, celebrating the small things and her mum might not stress for the rest of the afternoon. While she’s at home, she’ll go, “What a relief. My child is having a wonderful experience.” And she can get on, mum can get with her day and we’re getting on with ours here.

It would seem from this excerpt that Sophie’s interpersonal strategy of sending the video allows for communication with the parent. This strategy then appears to enable her to inform and reassure the parent, focusing on celebrating the positive experiences rather than the negatives. In addition, her comments suggest an awareness of the parent’s concerns and needs regarding their child’s inclusion at the centre.

In the following quote Sophie shows that she is also able to appreciate the perspectives of families as she reflects on a challenge that she has encountered with a relationship with a family whose wishes did not match her own personal beliefs.

I have a family I’m working with at the moment who have a child with low tone and I’ve requested medical and physio reports and I would like this child to sit in a chair. The child is capable of sitting in the chair, needs to be supervised for their own

protection and the parent demands that they only be in a high chair at all times. I suppose my belief system says to encourage that child if they can succeed, then assist them in succeeding in a battle with that family, because I have to, in my role, respect that family's wishes. So the child remains in a high chair. It's a new relationship, so as I continue to build this relationship with this parent, I want to gain their trust in saying, "I can see growth, I can see strength coming from these experiences. If you'll allow me a little bit of leverage, I'll show you the gains that we can make with your child." I don't yet have that respect from that family (Self-authorship Interview, 21st May 2015).

Sophie's quote above demonstrates an intrapersonal strength as she shows respect for the family's request regarding the use of the high chair and a willingness to accept their perspectives even though they did not align with her beliefs. This shows the strong relationship between her interpersonal dimension and evaluativistic belief system as she analyses the parent's perspective and her current context and does not appear to impose her own beliefs onto them. What is also evident in Sophie's comments is the importance of developing trust within her relationships with families, which then enables her to improve the developmental outcomes for the children that she is supporting.

Centre colleagues. Investigating Sophie's interpersonal relationships with her colleagues, it is clear that they are somewhat collaborative and at the same time built on mutual respect and teamwork. This then appears to support her with achieving successful outcomes for children with diverse needs. The quote below illustrates the importance of respect and teamwork in Sophie's relationships with her colleagues. It also illustrates her collaborative approach, which appears to enable her to reflect on other perspectives to guide her own pedagogies.

Mutual respect and a team approach. That there is an outcome that we are all

advocating for. If that's for the child, for a successful outcome for the family as a whole or for us a centre. I think that teamwork and respect for each person's experience and knowledge. And coming from a different standpoint, some of us see things with blinkers on and if you can engage with peers, then they help to, you know, maybe take those blinkers or rose-coloured glasses off and open your eyes a little bit to a different experience that they've had that may positively impact a particular child you're working with (Self-authorship Interview, 21st May 2015).

Above, Sophie discusses the nature of her relationships with colleagues as respectful and built around teamwork and assisting each other. Her comment *if you can engage with peers, then they help to, you know, maybe take those blinkers or rose-coloured glasses off and open your eyes a little bit to a different experience*, may imply that she is open to the perspectives of her colleagues again suggesting her evaluativist personal epistemology.

The following comments taken from Sophie's scenario interview again suggest that she looks to her colleagues to assist her with constructing knowledge and decision making when including children with diverse needs. When asked if she would seek out someone else's opinion regarding the situation presented in the scenario interview, she responded:

If I was that assistant and I had been shut down by that lead teacher, I think that the instinct in a teacher that says, "No, this situation is incorrect," would accelerate the need to go to someone else to quantify your own feelings, so to go to other team teachers, to go to your director or an area manager and say, "I'm working on this. This is what I feel," or to go to research again and seek out some more answers or alternatives (Scenario Interview, 21st May 2015).

It would seem from this quote that Sophie believes that it is not acceptable to ignore the perspectives of others. In addition, her comment about going to other team teachers, director, or

an area manager, suggests that she values an interpersonal practice of working with others to help resolve any challenges that she may encounter. Sophie's evaluativism stance is also evident in the quote as she talks about accessing research as well.

Her ability to relate to others is also illustrated in her reflection below where she talks about engaging in a team reflection to discuss possible teaching strategies that may be implemented in the future.

If I was planning that situation I would sit with the teaching team and perhaps look at elements not so much of the content of what we were discussing but the classroom design or resources that we were utilising that would have an impact on how that scenario played out. Is it something that we should enable those children to make those decisions themselves and therefore we can convert our teaching practice to reflect how they encourage their day to go or is it something that we direct. I think it would be more of a reflection point and maybe a bit of a critical reflection for the teaching team as to whether we let those things happen naturally or do we intervene (Stimulated Recall Interview, 18th March 2015).

From this reflection, Sophie again emphasises the collaborative nature of her relationships and interactions with colleagues when supporting the inclusion of children with diverse needs. Her comments also suggest that she is developing interdependence within her relationships with colleagues and has the confidence and the capability to facilitate team reflections.

Sophie's interpersonal skills with her centre colleagues are further explored in the comments below where she talks about providing leadership and guidance to less experienced colleagues in her interactions with them.

Leadership I suppose. Guidance in that my experience, having come from a few more different directions to come to this point. I work with people who have only ever worked in long day care and so, sometimes opening their eyes to opportunities elsewhere, can prove just something different. You know, I think I'm willing to try most of the time and perhaps, one of my strengths would be that I'm sure of myself (Self-authorship Interview, 21st May 2015).

In the above quote, Sophie reflects on how she uses her own experiences to introduce new perspectives to her colleagues, illustrating an interpersonal strength. Her statement, *one of my strengths would be that I'm sure of myself*, also shows clear links to her intrapersonal dimension and suggests that she has developed a strong sense of self in regards to her relationships with centre colleagues.

Children with diverse needs. Looking at Sophie's interpersonal relationships with children with diverse needs, an important theme to emerge from the interview data is that she adopts a supportive role where she aims to encourage their engagement, learning and development, and participation in the daily program. This is evident in the following quote where she reflected on a group time learning experience involving a child with diverse needs. It also indicates that she uses her relationships and interactions to help her guide the behaviour of children she is supporting.

So my option I chose to engage him in our class discussion immediately, in an attempt to give him an opportunity to learn something from the topic and also too to some ways control the class and make it a manageable experience for all the children. That way I didn't have one child having an outburst and another child feeding from that and losing the engagement of those children let alone the rest of the class so bringing him in early meant that he got the most out of that experience he was engaged from

the start and I could continue to hold his engagement throughout by coming back to his experience at the start (Stimulated Recall Interview, 18th March 2015).

This quote suggests that Sophie has developed a belief that if she can provide behaviour guidance, involve, and engage children with diverse needs in her planned learning experiences, their learning can be enhanced and they are less likely to cause disruption to the rest of the class. In addition, her comment *I chose to engage him in our class discussion immediately*, may indicate that she has an awareness and understanding of the child's needs and motivations. Her interpersonal practice of supporting children's learning and development, and participation in the daily program is again demonstrated in the quote below.

I hoped I achieved in doing in that scenario was that every child gained something from the experience, that the children who have those diverse needs aren't simply managed in a situation that they are still engaged in the program that they're learning something, that they're participating, they're part of the program and part of what comes next and so that's the teachable moments with those children was what I value in that situation as well as by managing their needs. I afford every other child in the room an opportunity to learn if I can do that effectively (Stimulated Recall Interview, 18th March, 2015).

From this quote it is again clear that Sophie shows an appreciation for the individual needs of children when supporting their inclusion into planned learning experiences. Additionally, her comments *I afford every other child in the room an opportunity to learn if I can do that effectively*, may imply that she understands the importance of her interactions with children, signifying a link to her intrapersonal dimension.

Another key interpersonal practice within her relationships with children with diverse

needs involves Sophie establishing expectations and ensuring that a consistent approach occurs within her interactions with them. This is reinforced in her reflections below when questioned about an observed interaction that she had with a child she was supporting during a mealtime experience.

Setting the expectations and those expectations being consistent are really important so that there is the same, irrespective of which teacher is in place with her at the time, particularly in the dining room which we know can be one of her trigger points, for some of her behaviours. It really important to have that clear expectation for her that these are the processes, we're doing this, next comes this, and then we will be doing this. So in order to enable her some autonomy and as every other child would be afforded the opportunity that "are you finished? Are you ready to go?" often I find that this particular child isn't given the option for fear of a possible outburst or you know that her behaviour may escalate. I find in my interactions with her that if I set those expectations and she is aware that this is what happens next and next, within those two she will work with me on choosing an appropriate, either would be fine (Stimulated Recall Interview, 18th March 2015).

What is evident in this reflection is that Sophie attempts to empower the child by promoting choice and some autonomy for her, enabling her to control what will happen next. Sophie's seemingly valuing of the child's perspective in this quote links to her evaluativistic personal epistemology. It also suggests a level of collaboration in her relationship with the child and that she has an awareness of the child's individual needs. The way in which she promotes autonomy and choice for the child demonstrates Sophie's capacity for mutual negotiation in her interpersonal relationships with children with diverse needs, and is also evidence of high quality inclusive practices.

The next reflection further demonstrates Sophie's promotion of autonomy within her interpersonal interactions with children as she discusses the importance of enabling them to make decisions.

Is it something that we should enable those children to make those decisions themselves and therefore we can convert our teaching practice to reflect how they encourage their day to go or is it something that we direct (Stimulated Recall Interview, 18th March 2015).

In the above quote Sophie illustrates an openness to the perspectives of children. It also possibly indicates that she has an awareness of how these perspectives connect to her enactment of teaching and interpersonal interactions. The following section explores the role of the intrapersonal dimension in Sophie's inclusion of children with diverse needs.

Intrapersonal dimension. The intrapersonal dimension is addressed in this section through the exploration of Sophie's sense of self and beliefs regarding the inclusion of children with diverse needs that have been communicated in her data. While analysing the intrapersonal data it became evident that Sophie has developed a strong internally defined sense of self and professional identity as an early childhood teacher, which seems to give her the confidence to challenge others and openly share her thoughts and opinions. Evidence of her sense of self is seen in the following quote where Sophie reflects on how her prior early childhood experiences have prepared her to work with children with diverse needs.

In my role, I have I suppose, the opportunity to say very openly I agree or I disagree with the opinion you're offering me and I feel confident enough in myself to argue that point and to stand my ground. I can appreciate that years ago, when I was learning to become who I am now, that I may not have had the guts to do so. And then, I suppose I remember going to my mentor in my bachelor degree saying, I was

on a prac and I hated everything this teacher was doing and my mentor saying to me then, “Use it as an experience to learn what you don’t want to do, the teacher you don’t want to become.” And that was just as valuable as having a positive experience and going, “Oh, I wanna be like that,” or, “That’s a strategy I’ll use.” Knowing what I don’t wanna do was maybe more so, more valuable (Self-authorship Interview, 21st May 2015).

This quote indicates the personal struggle that Sophie faced in regards to her sense of self while completing her bachelor studies. It also illustrates a shift from the reliance on others (her mentor) for direction to a more internally defined sense of self that gives her the confidence to argue and defend her own perspective. Her comment *knowing what I don’t wanna do was maybe more so, more valuable*, suggests that she has the capacity to look beyond the opinions of others to create her own beliefs and values about pedagogies. This also provides an ideal example of her internally defined sense of self.

Sophie’s confidence and capacity to look beyond the opinions of others when supporting the inclusion of children with diverse needs is evident in the following quote. It also shows evidence of her movement towards an internally defined set of values and beliefs about ECEC.

So, a centre I ran in Brisbane taught me that I wanted to create a culture around children and that they were capable beings. It sent me back Piaget, that zone of proximal development. The child can achieve A, is capable of achieving C, and all we need in the middle is B. And that B is resources and time and qualified teachers and opportunity. So I was working in centres where that wasn’t the priority. That their priority was to get them in, get them out, charge the fees and we were day care.

Whereas I really felt, I wanted to develop early childhood around the child and the

experience (Self-authorship Interview, 21st May 2015).

It would seem from this quote that Sophie's sense of self, values and beliefs are somewhat associated with her involvement with a previous ECEC service. In addition her comments about Piaget and the Zone of Proximal Development, suggests that theoretical perspectives have had a lasting effect on her sense of self, values and beliefs, emphasising the connection to her personal epistemology as she again illustrates that she draws on theoretical perspectives that have been important to her as an early childhood educator. Additionally, her comment about children being capable may indicate a significant belief that permits her to establish relationships with children that promote their autonomy, reinforcing the connection with her interpersonal dimension.

In addition to her beliefs and values about ECEC, the next quote shows that she has also established strong beliefs about practices to support the inclusion of children with diverse needs and has the confidence to challenge others when she feels that these are compromised. When questioned about an important experience that she had had with the inclusion of a child with diverse needs she responded:

The specialist arrived and was coming for a few days to spend some time at the centre and a lot of the strategies that this educator came essentially to teach us or to model for us as effective in working with children with this diagnosis, put a few of us on the back foot, I suppose is one way to explain it, challenged us, and challenged my beliefs about what inclusion was. I felt that this perceived expert was actually more excluding and restricting the rights of this child by physically restraining a child who was lashing out. I suppose, I found it challenging to model this system, challenging to the class as a whole (Self-authorship Interview, 21st May 2015).

These comments about excluding and restricting the rights of the child by physically

restraining, illustrate Sophie's personal beliefs about standards of practice in ECEC inclusion. These opinions also appear to be based on her observations of practice and suggest a commitment to delivering practices that support children's inclusion from a right based perspective. Below, Sophie extends on this important experience when asked how it influenced the way she now sees herself as an early childhood educator.

I was doing a good job. That I really did understand, that I understood my children, that I was leading my team well and that we had the right practices in place and that ethos, that where people were willing to share knowledge and stand up for rights of children and that type of thing. But as an educator myself it, I think, gave me faith in my own belief system. That even though this person was the perceived specialist, I felt just as qualified to be able to make an opinion, how to state my feelings, my strategies as to why this would work or wouldn't work. Because I could see that what she was doing didn't work and certainly wasn't working for this child that I had opportunities that would work, and so, I suppose, quantified my qualifications (Self-authorship Interview 21st May 2015).

What is transparent in this quote is that Sophie has developed a strong sense of self-worth as an early childhood educator. It also seems that the conflicting beliefs presented to her via the specialist have not caused her to question her own beliefs but rather seem to have reinforced them providing her with a stronger sense of self. In addition, her comments *that even though this person was the perceived specialist, I felt just as qualified to be able to make an opinion, how to state my feelings, my strategies as to why this would work or wouldn't work* may indicate that she is not dependent on the authority of experts to validate her decision making and ideas and will stand her ground when it comes to her beliefs about inclusion. This supports her evaluativistic personal epistemology that sees her reflecting on theories and

practices to help her determine if she would trust the opinions of others.

Finally, the following excerpt indicates that Sophie has developed a self-awareness of her changing personal beliefs regarding how she supports the inclusion of children with diverse needs. Here she talks about how her experiences with children with diverse needs have given her more strategies and made her more relaxed as an educator.

I think my teaching strategies have mellowed somewhat and that's probably experience that I'm not, that are, it destroyed the hierarchy of educator and child for me. I found that I came more down to child level and understood better to try to find the source of what's going on, rather than just dealing with the behaviour. I was trying to deal with the issue. I think it, yeah, it taught me to reflect on my own practices a lot more significantly than I would have done otherwise (Self-authorship Interview, 21st May 2015).

It would seem from Sophie's comment that *it destroyed the hierarchy of educator and child for me. I found that I came more down to child level and understood better to try to find the source of what's going on, rather than just dealing with the behaviour*, that she views her relationships with children on an equal basis and values their perspectives, again showing evidence of a more evaluativistic personal epistemology. It is also clear in this quote that her personal experiences with children with diverse needs have assisted her with considering their individual needs and has changed the way in which she views them. This also shows links to her interpersonal relationships with children with diverse needs, which is about valuing their perspectives through a focus on autonomy and rights. Additionally, her experiences have also appeared to enable her to engage in self-reflection on her own pedagogies, and as such these have added to her confidence and sense of self as an early childhood educator.

Section Summary

The theoretical framework of self-authorship has assisted with investigating Sophie's meaning making for inclusion and how she makes sense of her experiences of inclusion of children with diverse needs. This analysis has also demonstrated her ability to support inclusion within her centre context. In terms of Baxter Magolda's (2001) three developmental phases of self-authorship, it can be argued that Sophie is *self-authored* in her meaning making for inclusion. This is justified through her capacity to use a combination of practical reflection and evaluation of pedagogies and perspectives regarding the inclusion of children with diverse needs. As illuminated by Edwards (2014), the reflective capacity is an important aspect of self-authorship. In turn, Sophie's meaning making for inclusion highlights her self-authored ability to develop interdependent relationships that are respectful of other perspectives, collaborative, and practical in nature, and an independent sense of self and professional identity as an early childhood teacher.

It appears that Sophie's evaluativistic personal epistemology, which includes subjectivist and evaluativistic beliefs permits her to take a collaborative evaluativist approach to the construction of knowledge to support the inclusion of children with diverse needs, as well as using her personal beliefs as benchmarks to trial different teaching strategies from multiple sources. Her personal epistemology also seems to enable her to access a variety of perspectives and give the impression that it supports her interpersonal relationships and interactions with children with diverse needs, their families, and her colleagues. Lastly, it is evident within her intrapersonal dimension that her internally defined sense of self and professional identity as an early childhood teacher provides her with the confidence to challenge the perspectives of others and share her thoughts and opinions regarding the inclusion of children with diverse needs.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented the key findings of the study in light of the research question: *How do ECEC educators make meaning of their experiences with inclusion of children with diverse needs in their setting?* The analysis of data using the framework of self-authorship and its three dimensions of personal epistemology, interpersonal, and intrapersonal, has helped to explore the participants' experiences of supporting the inclusion of children with diverse needs and the meaning making processes that they use to make sense of their experiences. It has also illustrated their ability to support inclusion within the centre context and highlighted the three developmental phases of self-authorship.

In the next chapter, the findings presented in Chapter 4 are interpreted in consideration of the literature relevant to ECEC inclusion of children with diverse needs and the theoretical framework of self-authorship. Furthermore, the limitations and implications of this study, and additional research possibilities generated from the findings will be emphasised.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to review and discuss the major findings that have emerged from the interviews and observations presented in Chapter 4, and how these findings have addressed the research question: *How do ECEC educators make meaning of their experiences with inclusion of children with diverse needs in their setting?* This study has used the theoretical framework of self-authorship to investigate how ECEC educators experience and make meaning of the inclusion of children with diverse needs in the ECEC learning environment. As emphasised in the summary sections of each of the three participant profiles presented in Chapter 4, a detailed understanding of the interconnectedness of the three dimensions of self-authorship has helped to identify the nature of the participants' meaning making of their experiences of the inclusion of children with diverse needs. It has also provided a way of considering the enactment of inclusive pedagogies within an individual ECEC long day care context.

There were two main findings in this study. The first section discusses the key finding that participants' meaning making for inclusion of children with diverse needs, particularly critical reflection, is related to self-authorship (*following external formulas, the crossroads, or self-authored*) within the context of their work in ECEC. The next section is a discussion of the second finding that there appears to be a relationship between the three dimensions of self-authorship (personal epistemology, interpersonal, and intrapersonal) and the participants' beliefs about the enactment of inclusive pedagogies. The implications of these findings for ECEC inclusion are then discussed followed by the limitations of the study, and possible further research opportunities generated from the findings of this research project.

Meaning Making for Inclusion is Related to Self-authorship

The theoretical framework of self-authorship has been used by past researchers to assess how ECEC educators engage in meaning making of their experiences through their personal epistemology, identity and interpersonal relationships (Brownlee et al., 2010; Edwards; 2014). However, to date, there has been no research, which has explored how ECEC educators' self-authorship is related to critical reflection and meaning making for inclusion of children with diverse needs. According to Baxter Magolda, (2008) and Brownlee et al. (2010), self-authorship involves critical reflection across the three dimensions of self-authorship by

- evaluating a range of perspectives to construct knowledge (evaluativist personal epistemology),
- negotiating interdependent social relationships that are respectful of multiple perspectives (identity), and
- constructing values and personal beliefs through a process of being open to many perspectives (intrapersonal relationships).

A significant finding in this study was that a relationship existed between each participant's identified phase of self-authorship (either *following external formulas, the crossroads, or self-authored*) and the extent to which they critically reflected on pedagogies for inclusion. Each of the participants is now discussed to exemplify this key finding.

Isabella: following others and self. Isabella was identified as showing some characteristics of following others, similar to what was identified by Baxter Magolda (2010) as the following formula phase. Her subjectivist and objectivist personal epistemology appeared to be related to a reliance on direction from authority figures to help validate her

opinions and decision making for inclusion instead of internally building them through critical reflection (as evident in an evaluativistic personal epistemology). The EYLF (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009) stresses the importance of reflective practice and encourages ECEC educators to critically analyse the curriculum, pedagogy, and children's experiences to assist them with investigating all aspects of the early learning environment from a variety of perspectives. Furthermore, Brownlee et al. (2010) indicated that critical reflection which involves the weighing up of multiple perspectives (theoretical and practical) is a characteristic of self-authorship.

Although Isabella was open to others' opinions, she did not describe a process of critically reflecting on such perspectives. She indicated that she would implement a teaching strategy and then reflect on whether it was successful or not without evaluating theoretical or practical evidence to support her reflections. Edwards (2014) referred to this approach as trial and error that was underpinned by what she described as a practical reflection on teaching practices, which then helped guide decision making about additional teaching strategies that could be trialled. Isabella's trial and error and practical reflective approach to teaching for inclusion seems to be related to her subjectivist and objectivist personal epistemology. Her beliefs about knowledge and knowing suggest that she would not rely on critical reflection because for her, knowledge is transmitted and absolute (objectivism) as well as based on personal opinions (subjectivism). Her trial and error and practical reflective approach may also be connected to her role as a teaching assistant. The observations and interview responses showed that Isabella's lead educator consistently coordinated and directed the pedagogies in the room. Within the Australian ECEC context, it is common practice for the lead educator to take on the responsibility for planning and implementing the curriculum, but this means that those working in assistant educator roles may not get learning opportunities

that can support critical reflection on pedagogies related to inclusion of children with diverse needs.

In the interpersonal dimension, Isabella appears to be dependent on her more experienced colleagues. Though she expressed a need for supportive relationships with her colleagues, it appeared that there was a reliance on following her more experienced colleagues to help her make decisions for the inclusion of children with diverse needs. This reliance then seemed to be connected to her objectivist personal epistemology as it appears that she would implement teaching strategies without critical reflection on theoretical or practical evidence. There was no indication in her interview responses that she critically evaluates the perspectives of her more experienced colleagues when enacting inclusion, which is an important characteristic of self-authored individuals identified in past research (Baxter Magolda, 2001; Edwards, 2014).

However, again, this reliance may also be related to her teaching assistant role. With regard to her interpersonal relationships with children with diverse needs, the observations of her pedagogies and interview responses indicated an emphasis on supporting their inclusion into planned learning experiences by focusing on and implementing behaviour guidance strategies. However, this focus on behaviour guidance appeared to be strongly connected to her objectivist beliefs as it would seem that she delivered strategies to children without reflecting on a range of perspectives, including those of the children. As reported by Baxter Magolda and King (2012), the development of self-authorship requires the ability to be able to carefully and critically reflect on others' perspectives. This was not evident in Isabella's interview or observation data. There was also no evidence to suggest that she supported children with diverse needs to be active meaning makers in their own learning. When ECEC educators support children to play a role as active meaning makers, educators show a

capacity to reflect on many perspectives, including those of children for whom they have responsibility and this was not evident in Isabella's practice.

In the intrapersonal dimension there was evidence of following others' values when making meaning as well as the development of her own internally defined set of beliefs. The majority of Isabella's interview responses suggested a reliance on and a commitment to her centre philosophy statement and more experienced colleagues' perspectives for a sense of self as an early childhood educator (Baxter Magolda & King, 2012a). Isabella's reliance on, and a commitment to the others' perspectives is reinforced in her consistent statements about making decisions regarding pedagogies based on the centre philosophy and the views of her experienced teacher colleagues. However, there is some evidence in her responses to suggest that she may be moving towards a focus on "following self". This reflects an internally defined sense of self regarding her inclusion of children with diverse needs and she is beginning to display some independence with her decision making to support them. This movement is significant as, according to Baxter Magolda (2001), an internally defined sense of self involves a move from mainly accepting knowledge from authorities to constructing one's own internal belief system based on the evaluation of multiple perspectives. Isabella's movement towards an internally defined sense of self is an important finding as it at times appears to provide her with the confidence in her abilities as an early childhood educator to question the practices of others when children's safety is compromised. Ultimately, her confidence in her abilities to question others' practices may also suggest that she engages in a level of reflection that involves evaluating her own beliefs and the beliefs and practices of those she is disagreeing with before making an informed decision.

Although, as previously discussed, Isabella seems to *follow formulas*, her developing internally defined sense of self shows evidence that she may be moving beyond "following

others” to “following self” in the intrapersonal dimension (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). This finding is important as it supports Baxter Magolda’s and King’s (2012) view that the development of self-authorship is more complicated and nuanced than a simple trajectory, and that the movement towards being self-authored is related to an individual’s own characteristics, experiences, challenges, and support systems that are accessible to them. Baxter Magolda’s and King’s comments indicate a possible contextual relationship to self-authorship development. This is pertinent to this study as mentioned earlier, Isabella’s teaching assistant role may be related to her self-authorship development. It could also be proposed that her movement towards *the crossroads* in the intrapersonal dimension may be connected to her subjectivist thinking identified in the personal epistemology dimension as this seems to permit her to have some focus on her own internally defined beliefs and opinions (personal opinions evident in subjectivism). This indicates the important role of the personal epistemology dimension in self-authorship development for ECEC educators supporting the inclusion of children with diverse needs.

Jane: at the crossroads but moving on. Jane demonstrated many characteristics to suggest she was at *the crossroads* when making meaning of her experiences of inclusion of children with diverse needs (Baxter Magolda & King, 2012a). Like Isabella, she described a practical reflective and trial and error approach to her inclusive teaching practices. This practical reflective approach seemed to be related to her subjectivist personal epistemology. However, unlike Isabella, she also showed evidence of emerging evaluativist thinking as her interview responses suggested that she sometimes evaluated multiple pedagogies (practical evaluativism) and was open to other’s perspectives. It would seem that this practical evaluativistic approach enabled her to reflect on and evaluate pedagogies (but not theoretical perspectives), which was connected to her ability to support inclusion although this did not include theoretical perspectives. Previous research has found that even though individuals

holding practical evaluativistic beliefs evaluated teaching practices, like Jane, this did not involve the critical reflective process of evaluating theory and research (Brownlee et al., 2010; Edwards, 2014). In addition, Jane's concentration on reflecting on her practices rather than theories may have crucial implications for the way in which she is able to construct her pedagogies and evaluate the practices of experts (Brownlee et al., 2010). Jane's emerging evaluativist beliefs appear to also support her meaning making within her interpersonal relationships with colleagues and external early childhood professionals. This is an interesting finding as it seems that her ability to be open to multiple perspectives (emerging evaluativism) enables her to then communicate and exchange important information, resources, and pedagogies relevant to the individual needs of children with diverse needs. While Jane was open to others' perspectives, there was no evidence that she critically collaborated or negotiated with families or colleagues when enacting inclusion. According to Edwards (2014), the ability to collaborate and negotiate others' perspectives to create new knowledge is underpinned by a critical reflective approach, which is a key characteristic of self-authorship. However, unlike Isabella and Sophie, Jane did stress the importance of collaborating with external early childhood professionals and indicated that this collaboration enabled her to access new information to help implement teaching strategies. Her focus on collaborating with external early childhood professionals is an important finding and is supported by ACECQA (2011). ACECQA highlighted that engaging in collaborative relationships with external early childhood professionals can assist ECEC educators with enhancing children's developmental outcomes although, there was no indication that she engaged in critical reflection during this collaboration.

In regards to her interpersonal relationships with children, Jane facilitates the inclusion of children with diverse needs by developing an understanding of children's individual needs and introducing specific teaching strategies and resources to support those

needs. Jane relies on the knowledge that she has of each child, and what has previously worked or not worked, as the foundation for her decision making, which is reflective of her subjectivist personal epistemology and practical reflective approach. There is also no evidence in Jane's data to suggest that she engages in mutual conversations with children with diverse needs that value their perspectives. Previous research by Nutbrown and Clough (2009) indicated the importance of ensuring that all the children in the ECEC service develop a sense of belonging and are provided with opportunities to share their perspectives and to be heard.

With respect to the intrapersonal dimension, Jane's interview responses indicated that she had developed an internally defined sense of self, which included personal beliefs about inclusion and a professional identity as an early childhood educator. Her internally defined sense of self is of significance as it suggests that her meaning making is moving towards being *self-authored* in the intrapersonal dimension. This sense of self appears to be connected to her emerging evaluativist beliefs where she evaluates pedagogies in the construction of her own internally constructed values and beliefs (Edwards, 2014). This seems to be related to her capacity to interact with others in a way that is respectful of many perspectives, and to not always rely on or accept knowledge from her colleagues and external early childhood professionals (Baxter Magolda, 2001). These internally constructed values and beliefs about inclusion are noteworthy as they seem to provide Jane with the confidence within her interpersonal relationships with colleagues and external early childhood professionals to challenge, question and evaluate their pedagogies and opinions and to stand up for rights of children with diverse needs when their safety is at risk by the pedagogies of others. Jane's internally defined sense of self again reinforces the complexities of self-authorship development and supports Baxter Magolda and King's (2012) assertion that the development of self-authorship can be evident in one or in all of the dimensions of self-authorship.

Sophie: self-authored. Sophie described many characteristics of a self-authored individual, including an evaluativistic personal epistemology and the capacity to engage in critical reflection regarding her pedagogies for inclusion (Baxter Magolda, 2010; Brownlee et al., 2010). This evidence of critical reflection appeared to be linked to her ability to be able to independently negotiate multiple perspectives, including research and theory that seemed to assist her with the evaluation of information and for inclusion. Previous research, in the context of ECEC that have utilised self-authorship as a theoretical framework, has highlighted the significance of critical reflective practice in the development of self-authorship and for effective pedagogies (Brownlee et al., 2010; Cartmel et al., 2012; Johnson, 2013; Osgood, 2012). Past research has also shown that ECEC educators' practices of critically reflecting on their pedagogies, beliefs and behaviours is related to their implementation of fully inclusive and high quality early learning environments for all children (Rix & Paige-Smith, 2011; Thornton & Underwood, 2013; Vakil et al., 2003).

From Sophie's interview responses it would seem that her collaborative evaluativist personal epistemology, as well as using her personal beliefs as a standard to evaluate teaching strategies from multiple sources, assisted her enactment of inclusive practices. Sophie's use of her personal beliefs as a standard to help evaluate teaching strategies from various sources is an interesting finding as it shows clearly the connection between personal epistemology and intrapersonal dimensions of self-authorship. It also shows that she is able to use her own professional voice, and has trust in it, when evaluating perspectives (Brownlee et al., 2010). Sophie's meaning making includes listening to and trusting her professional voice when critically analysing information and making judgments to support inclusion is of importance as it is a typical characteristic of self-authored individuals (Baxter Magolda & King, 2012a).

With regard to the interpersonal dimension, Sophie's evaluativist personal epistemology appears to be connected to her focus on collaboration with her colleagues

(interpersonal) as a way to critically reflect upon and evaluate teaching strategies (evaluativist personal epistemology) in order to make decisions about their future implementation. With regard to family relationships, Sophie also shows that she values interdependent and collaborative relationships, by being respectful of their perspectives when making decisions and enacting teaching strategies to support inclusion. This is noteworthy as it supports Sophie's evaluative personal epistemology where she evaluates others' perspectives to help figure out her own teaching strategies (Edwards, 2014). Past literature that has investigated educator practice has stressed the importance of collaborative relationships within the ECEC context (Buysse & Hollingsworth, 2009; Mohay & Reid, 2006). Additionally, as outlined in the EYLF, inviting children and families to actively participate in the planning and implementation of the curriculum is labelled as a high quality inclusive practice (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009). This link between critical reflection evident in an evaluativist personal epistemology and collaborative, respectful interpersonal relationships highlights the need to understand more about how personal epistemologies specifically, and self-authorship generally, may mediate inclusive pedagogies that are respectful of families and colleagues.

The intrapersonal dimension evident in Sophie's interview responses and observations suggests an internally defined sense of self, which includes personal beliefs about inclusive pedagogies and beliefs about her professional identity. This is similar to Jane's profile. However, unlike Jane, the findings also indicate that Sophie's internally defined sense of self may be connected to her self-authoring capacity to critically reflect on and evaluate multiple perspectives regarding pedagogies for inclusion. It seems that Sophie's internally defined sense of self relates to her confidence and capacity to challenge the opinions of others and to create her own beliefs and values about pedagogies to support inclusion. This is a relevant finding and is supported by Edwards (2014) who described self-authored individuals as those

having the capacity to investigate, reflect on, and internally select lifelong values and beliefs to establish their own identity rather than relying on those of others. Her self-authoring capacity to critically reflect on and evaluate multiple perspectives illustrates an evaluativist personal epistemology characteristic as describe by Brownlee et al. (2010) and Edwards (2014). It also supports previous research that has indicated that meaning making within the intrapersonal dimension is strongly linked to the personal epistemology dimension and as such it is viewed as a crucial element in the development of self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2001).

Section Summary

This section has discussed the relationship between each participant's identified phase of self-authorship (either *following external formulas, the crossroads, or self-authored*) and the degree to which they reflected critically on pedagogies to support the inclusion of children with diverse needs. It has revealed that self-authorship, with a strong focus on an evaluativist personal epistemology and critical reflection, may assist ECEC educators with the development of a professional identity for inclusion, interdependent interpersonal relationships with others, and the enactment of high quality ECEC inclusive education.

As mentioned previously, the ability to engage in critical reflection is viewed within the ECEC context as a crucial characteristic of high quality inclusion (Gray, 2013), and is a requirement of Australia's NQF (ACECQA, 2014). This study proposes that self-authorship theory may provide a conceptual framework to address the NQF's requirement of ECEC educators engaging in ongoing critical reflection of children's learning and development. Another important outcome of this research finding is the contribution to the research of self-authorship as it again reinforces that personal epistemology is a leading dimension. The next section explores a finding about a possible association between self-authorship and the

participants' values and beliefs regarding children with diverse needs.

Self-authorship and Beliefs about the Enactment of Inclusive Practices

Another significant finding to emerge from this study was the connection between self-authorship and the participants' beliefs about the enactment of inclusive teaching practices. These beliefs about enactment of pedagogies varied across participants and are related to the dimensions of self-authorship, particularly personal epistemology. This finding supports previous literature (Jordan et al., 2009; Mogharreban, 2007) that suggest inclusive pedagogies may be reliant on educators' underlying beliefs, especially their personal epistemology. Jordan et al. also indicated that to support inclusion, professional learning for educators should challenge beliefs about their teaching role and responsibilities, as well as their personal epistemology. The details of each participants' beliefs about enactment of pedagogies and the possible relationship that exists with self-authorship are presented in the following sections.

Isabella: direct instruction and keeping them safe. Isabella believed that children with diverse needs can gain information through direct instruction and that she can deliver information to children with diverse needs via her interactions with them. She also indicated that this approach would help them learn how to use correct behaviour, and remain calm and not disrupt the inclusion and experiences of others. Furthermore, when implementing behaviour guidance with children with diverse needs Isabella seems to also trust that she can provide the right answers and does not require children's perspectives, or needs to provide them with opportunities to internally construct their own meaning making to achieve this outcome.

Isabella's belief about providing right answers in inclusive pedagogies supports her objectivist thinking and the role of the personal epistemology dimension in the development

of beliefs and values about teaching children with diverse needs. This is supported by the research of Brownlee et al. (2010) who suggested that individuals with objectivist thinking may take an absolutist perspective that involves them believing that experts can provide the correct answers, whilst also failing to recognise the importance of individuals constructing their own meaning. These findings are of importance as they indicate that ECEC educators with an objectivist personal epistemology supporting children with diverse needs may not acknowledge children's perspectives in their implementation of teaching practices, which does not reflect the characteristics of high quality inclusion (Zhang, 2011). In addition, Isabella's beliefs about providing the right answer to children with diverse needs reinforces the view that she tends to follow others (similar to *following external formulas* phase).

The other key belief about the enactment of inclusive pedagogies involved a focus on protecting and keeping children safe. Her interview responses showed that she would challenge and question beliefs of others when children's safety was compromised. Isabella indicated in her interview responses that her beliefs about providing protection and keeping children with diverse needs safe were imitations of those promoted by the centre's philosophy statement and trusted and more experienced colleagues. Once again this illuminates the strong influence of the personal epistemology dimension as it shows an objectivist thinking, which relies on others to transmit information to her and does involve critical reflection of theoretical perspectives. Isabella's possible imitation of the beliefs and values of her centre's philosophy statement and experienced and trusted colleagues is of importance as it also supports the research findings of Edwards (2014).

Jane: individual differences and promoting safety. Jane believed that all children with diverse needs are different and as such she would implement teaching strategies that were based on their individual needs and abilities. This is a relevant finding as previous

ECEC research has stressed the importance of catering for the individual needs of children with diverse needs and indicated that this is a characteristic of high quality inclusion (Buysse & Hollingsworth, 2009; Mohay & Reid, 2006; Zhang, 2011). Jane indicated that she cannot always depend on others having the right pedagogies due to the individual differences evident amongst children with diverse needs (emerging evaluativism) (Brownlee et al., 2010).

Instead, it would seem that she draws upon her own personal opinion about what works and what does not work for individual children with diverse needs (subjectivism) based on her own knowledge of the children and their particular needs.

Jane also indicated that she holds beliefs about the importance of promoting safety for children with diverse needs, and standing up for their rights. Although the interview data suggests that she is open to others' perspectives and pedagogies, when these do not promote safety for children with diverse needs or respect their rights she will challenge and question them. This finding is significant as it suggests that her intrapersonal belief about children with diverse needs safety and rights is strongly related to her emerging evaluativism. The fact that she will challenge and question the opinions and practices of others may indicate that she would evaluate them first to see if they connected to her beliefs before making an informed opinion about their appropriateness (practical evaluativism). Jane's beliefs about promoting safety for children with diverse needs and standing up for their rights is also of significance as it seems to indicate that she uses her own professional voice (intrapersonal) when making decisions for inclusion (Brownlee et al., 2010). The use of her professional voice again gives the impression that her meaning making is moving towards being *self-authored* in the intrapersonal dimension.

Sophie: capable learners and enhancing learning through behaviour guidance.

Sophie consistently indicated in her interview responses a belief about the enactment of

inclusive pedagogy that involved children as capable learners. This belief was also reinforced in the observations of her interactions with children. Sophie's belief about children being capable learners appears to be related to her evaluativistic stance, again reinforcing the predominate role of the personal epistemology in beliefs about the enactment of teaching practices. Sophie values children's voices in decision making when supporting their inclusion and this approach to teaching promotes choice and autonomy for them. This belief may also suggest that she accepts that knowledge can be internally constructed rather than transmitted by external sources, and that children with diverse needs are capable and active creators of their own meaning (Brownlee et al., 2004; Brownlee et al., 2010). This finding supports previous research that has suggested a relationship between early childhood educators' evaluativist beliefs and constructivist pedagogies (Brownlee et al., 2011b).

Sophie also described a belief that learning can be enhanced for all children, including those with diverse needs, through a focus on behaviour guidance. She consistently indicated that her approach to behaviour guidance was strongly connected to the individual needs of children and their learning, engagement, and participation in planned learning experiences. So rather than a focus on controlling or managing behaviours, Sophie demonstrated a respect for, and negotiation with, individual children with diverse needs. This respect for children's perspectives is evident in the self-authored phase of self-authorship (Edwards, 2014) and in high quality inclusion identified in the EYLF (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009). Furthermore, what is of most significance is that if there are conflicting beliefs about the enactment of behaviour guidance presented to her by others, her self-authored capacity seems to permit her to challenge these while at the same defending and staying true to her own beliefs. Sophie's beliefs about behaviour guidance are notable as it suggests that a self-authored ECEC educator supporting the inclusion of children with diverse needs may in fact facilitate high quality inclusion that promote children's participation and

active learning.

Section Summary

Through the theoretical framework of self-authorship, this section has allowed for an exploration of the interaction between the epistemological, interpersonal, and intrapersonal dimensions, and how these are related to the participants' beliefs about the enactment of children with diverse needs. This finding has revealed that self-authorship, with an emphasis on an evaluativistic personal epistemology, may help to promote ECEC educators' development of values and beliefs about children with diverse needs that then enable them to cater for children's individual needs, and that also acknowledge their perspectives in the implementation of inclusive teaching practices. Research specific to the ECEC sector has shown a clear association between the beliefs that educators hold about ECEC inclusion and how these can contribute negatively or positively to effective inclusive education (Brancato, 2013; Buysse & Hollingsworth, 2009). This finding has significant implications for ECEC inclusion as it suggests that when developing professional learning opportunities for practising educators there should be a focus on facilitating their self-authorship, specifically their capability to develop an evaluativist position. It has also contributed to further understandings about ECEC educators' values and beliefs about children with diverse needs and their pedagogies for inclusion.

Research Implications for ECEC Inclusion and Practice

This section highlights the implications of the findings of this research project for the inclusion of children with diverse needs within the ECEC context and educator practice. An emphasis on the implications for ECEC inclusion and practice permits the discussion of the real-world implications of the development of self-authorship for ECEC educators and ultimately for the successful inclusion of children with diverse needs. The most significant

implication to stem from this study is the crucial roles that the personal epistemology dimension and critical reflection played in regards to the participants' development of self-authorship and their enactment of pedagogies to support inclusion. This implication is supported by other research that has indicated that personal epistemology, with the emphasis on critical reflection of multiple perspectives, is central to self-authorship development (Brownlee et al., 2011b; Brownlee et al., 2011a; Edwards, 2014; Silverman, 2007). This thesis suggests that critical reflection about pedagogies and beliefs may be connected to ECEC educators' enactment of high quality inclusion and the subsequent positive learning outcomes for children with diverse needs. The connection of critical reflection and enactment of high quality inclusion is supported by previous research that has indicated that it is a crucial element to effective practice and is related to the implementation of inclusive, high quality early learning environments for all children (Rix & Paige-Smith, 2011; Thornton & Underwood, 2013; Vakil et al., 2003). These imperatives regarding educator critical reflection indicate a need for training bodies to move past competency-based teaching methods to include approaches to learning that support ECEC educators to engage in reflective practice that includes reflecting on theory and research (Brownlee et al., 2010; Edwards, 2014).

Another implication of this study has been the use of self-authorship and its three dimensions (personal epistemology, interpersonal, and intrapersonal) as a new theoretical framework to help explore good practice for inclusion of children with diverse needs and inclusive practices. Although self-authorship theory has been used by researchers to study ECEC educators (Brownlee et al., 2010; Edwards, 2014), to date, a review of literature has revealed that there is no evidence of any other research that has utilised it to help explore the inclusion of children with diverse need in the ECEC context. The use of self-authorship as the theoretical lens has helped to understand how ECEC educators make meaning of their

experiences of the inclusion of children with diverse needs. In addition it has also assisted with revealing what might characterise a self-authored profile for ECEC inclusion, providing with a way in which to consider good practice for inclusion. Like the participant Sophie, a self-authored ECEC educator can be characterised as having the ability to critically reflect on their pedagogies using theoretical perspectives, establish strong and respectful interdependent relationships with colleagues, and children with diverse needs and their families, and as having an internally defined sense of self and professional early childhood educator identity. This thesis proposes that a self-authored ECEC educator will be in a better position to enact high quality inclusion for children with diverse needs because an evaluativist set of beliefs is linked to critical reflection, which promotes a focus on respectfully evaluating multiple perspectives, including those of families, children, colleagues and research.

It also suggests that the theory of self-authorship could provide a theoretical framework for professional development for current and future ECEC educators supporting the inclusion of children with diverse needs. The notion that self-authorship might be a useful theoretical framework for professional development for ECEC educators is supported by Edwards (2014). Edwards proposed that professional development that supports educators to engage in critical reflection in the three dimension of constructing knowledge (personal epistemology), interpersonal relationships (leading to respectful collaboration) and personal values and beliefs (intrapersonal), could facilitate the evaluation of contrasting opinions to construct new ideas about inclusion and enable the development of a clear, consistent sense of professional identity.

Ensuring Trustworthiness of Findings

This research project, using the theoretical framework of self-authorship, has offered new insights into the inclusion of children with diverse needs within ECEC settings. The use

of case study methodology does not permit generalizability of findings but does enable the reader to transfer the findings to one's own context, if a thick description of the context is provided (Flyvbjerg, 2011; Simons, 2009). The transferability of findings from this study to other national ECEC settings with similar contexts for supporting the inclusion of children with diverse needs may be possible. Australian ECEC services are regulated by the National Quality Framework, which includes the National Quality Standards and the nationally approved curriculum, the Early Years Learning Framework, providing some similarity in context although other aspects of the context need to be considered by readers in transferring findings. The aspects that might need to be considered include the level of qualification held by educators, as well as their socioeconomic status. Further, transferability, rather than generalisability, may also be possible to international ECEC services where there is some similarity with policies, regulations, and curricula.

Finally, all of the findings presented in this thesis need to be considered in terms of researcher reflexivity, which has been mentioned previously. As a trained and practising early childhood teacher, predominantly working within the context of ECEC inclusion and a parent of a child with a diverse need, it was at times challenging for the researcher of this study to maintain an objective mindset when conducting the interviews. This required the researcher to acknowledge and put aside personal beliefs and values about ECEC inclusion of children with diverse needs. To monitor this objectivity, throughout the interview and analysis phases of the study, member checking with participants and peer debriefing with supervisors were employed. This enabled the participants to check for accuracy and credibility of the collected data and for the supervisory team to question and critique the researcher's findings. Although a conscious effort was made to stay objective during the interviews, the researcher acknowledges the semi-structured interviews were designed to be interactional and a co-constructive experience for both the interviewer and interviewee, and as such the opinions

and perceptions of each other when the interviews were carried may have impacted on the interviewing technique and responses (Breathnach, 2013; Denscombe, 2014).

Future Research

The findings of this research have added new understandings to the field of inclusive practices in ECEC. This qualitative case study, using in-depth interviews and field observations, has investigated the inclusion of children with diverse needs in early childhood education and care (ECEC) services through the lens of self-authorship theory. Furthermore, several key findings have highlighted how early childhood educators working in a single long day care service make meaning of their experiences of the inclusion of children with diverse needs.

As this is the first research project to date to study the inclusion of children with diverse needs in early ECEC services through the theoretical lens of self-authorship, further research might usefully explore how participants' self-authorship develop over time. For the participants identified as being at the *following external formulas*, and *the crossroads* phases of self-authorship, such longitudinal work could document movement towards becoming self-authored which would have implications for effective professional development for inclusive practices.

Another potential area for research could involve further investigation of critical reflection within the context of ECEC inclusion of children with diverse needs, using self-authorship. This could help provide a foundation for understanding the relationship of critical reflection and inclusive pedagogies for children with diverse needs, while also helping to facilitate more critical reflection for ECEC educators. Previous literature has also indicated a need for further research about critical reflection within the ECEC context (Brownlee et al, 2010; Edwards, 2014). As identified in this study, educator capacity to include children with

diverse needs is a complex concept and is strongly related to their personal epistemology and critical reflection, their interpersonal relationship with others, and their identity and personal beliefs. Future research in the Australian ECEC context that focuses on critical reflective practice through the lens of self-authorship, may also help to flesh out all factors that are connected to educators' implementation of the NQF. The NQF, which is designed to regulate, support and guide ECEC educators' pedagogies and curriculum planning for children, includes both implied as well as clear expectations for the delivery of inclusion for children with diverse needs against its desired regulations, quality standards and learning outcomes. Self-authorship, with a focus critical reflection, may assist educators with their ability to meet these expectations.

Conclusion

Although there is an increasing commitment in Australia to the inclusion of children with diverse needs in ECEC, one of the most significant challenges relates to the capabilities of educators to enact high quality inclusive practices (Cologon, 2014; Kemp, 2016). It is also clear that the current professional development and training available to ECEC educators may not effectively prepare them to support inclusion of children with diverse needs (Kemp, 2016). The findings of this study suggest that successful inclusive practices within ECEC settings can be related to educators' meaning making process, and their epistemology, interpersonal and intrapersonal development. Findings of this study also highlight that personal epistemology, particularly educators' capacity to be able to critically reflect on others' perspectives, is central to the development of self-authorship and the implementation of inclusive practices (Edwards, 2014). This thesis suggests that the theoretical framework of self-authorship can provide a different approach to help understand the inclusion of children with diverse needs in ECEC and how educators make meaning of their experiences of

inclusion. It also proposes that the successful inclusion of children with diverse needs within ECEC settings can be supported by educators' self-authorship development that includes:

- an evaluativistic belief, which is underpinned by critical reflection;
- interdependent relationships with children with diverse needs, their family, and teaching colleagues; and
- an internally defined sense of self and professional identity.

As previously acknowledged, this study makes a unique contribution to research regarding ECEC inclusion of children with diverse needs through its use of the theoretical framework of self-authorship and suggests that it can help develop, enhance, and sustain high quality inclusive pedagogies for educators.

References

- Allen, K., & Cowdery, G. (2005). *The exceptional child: Inclusion in early childhood* (5th ed.). Clifton Park, NY: Thomson Delmar Learning.
- Alston, M., & Bowles, W. (2003). *Research for social workers: An introduction to methods* (2nd ed.). Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin.
- Anderson, E. (2014). Transforming early childhood education through critical reflection. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 15(1), 81-82.
- Angen, M. (2000). Evaluating interpretive inquiry: Reviewing the validity debate and opening dialogue. *Qualitative Health Research*, 10(3), 378-395. doi: 10.1177/104973230001000308.
- Attree, P., & Milton, B. (2006). Critically appraising qualitative research for systematic reviews: Defusing the methodological cluster bombs. *Evidence & Policy*, 2, 109-128.
- Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority [ACECQA]. (2011). Guide to the national quality standard. Retrieved from <http://acecqa.gov.au/national-quality-framework/the-national-quality-standard>.
- Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority [ACECQA]. (2014). Qualifications. Retrieved from <http://acecqa.gov.au/educators-and-providers1/qualifications>.
- Baez, B. (2002). Confidentiality in qualitative research: Reflections on secrets, power and agency. *Qualitative Research*, 2(1), 35-58. doi: 10.1177/1468794102002001638.
- Baker-Ericzén, M., Garnand Mueggenborg, M., & Shea, M., (2009). Impact of trainings on child care providers' attitudes and perceived competence toward inclusion: What factors are associated with change?. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, 28(4), 196-208.
- Barber, H., Cohrssen, C., & Church, A. (2014). Meeting the Australian national quality standards: A case study of the professional learning needs of early childhood educators. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 39(4), 21-27.
- Baris Gunersel, A., Barnett, P., & Etienne, M. (2013). Promoting self-authorship of college educators: Exploring the impact of a faculty development program. *Journal of Faculty Development*, 27(1), 35-44. Retrieved from <http://gateway.library.qut.edu.au/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/1369310751?accountid=13380>.
- Baxter Magolda, M. (2001) *Making their own way: Narratives for transforming higher education to promote self-authorship*. Sterling, Virginia.: Stylus.
- Baxter Magolda, M. (2008). Three elements of self-authorship. *Journal of College Student Development*, 49(4), 269-284.

- Baxter Magolda, M. (2010). The interweaving of epistemological, intrapersonal, and interpersonal development in the evolution of self-authorship. In M. Baxter Magolda, E. Creamer & P. Meszaros (Eds.). *Development and assessment of self-authorship: Exploring the concept across cultures* (pp. 25-44). Sterling, Virginia: Stylus.
- Baxter Magolda, M., & King, P. (2004). Preface. In *Learning partnerships: Theory and models of practice to educate for self-authorship* (pp. xxii). Sterling, Virginia: Stylus.
- Baxter Magolda, M., & King, P. (2007). Interview strategies for assessing self-authorship: Constructing conversations to assess meaning making. *Journal of College Student Development*, 48(5), 491-508.
- Baxter Magolda, M., & King, P. (2012a). *Assessing meaning making and self-authorship: theory research and application*. San Francisco, CA: Wiley Periodicals
- Baxter Magolda, M., & King, P. (2012b). Special issue: Assessing meaning making and self-authorship--theory, research, and application. *ASHE Higher Education Report*, 38(3), 1-138. doi: 10.1002/aehe.20003.
- Bell, J. (2005). *Doing your research project: A guide for first-time researchers in education, health and social science* (4th ed.). Two Penn Plaza, NY: Open University Press.
- Berg, B. (2007). *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences* (6th ed.). Boston: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon.
- Berthelsen, D., Brownlee, J., & Boulton-Lewis, G. (2002). Caregivers' epistemological beliefs in toddler programs. *Early Child Development and Care*, 172(5), 503-516. doi: 10.1080/03004430214547.
- Berthelsen, D., Brownlee, J., Boulton-Lewis, G., McGahey, P., & Dunbar, S. (2008). Investigating epistemological beliefs in vocational education for child care workers: New ways of thinking about learning and training. *Australian Educational Researcher*, 35(3), 135-153. doi:10.1007/BF03246293.
- Brancato, K. (2013). *Striving for quality in early childhood inclusion* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <http://eprints.qut.edu.au/>.
- Breathnach, H. (2013). *Parent views of play in the preparatory year in Queensland* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <http://eprints.qut.edu.au/>.
- Boes, L., Baxter Magolda, M., & Buckley, J. (2010). Foundational assumptions and constructive development theory: Self-authorship narratives. In M. Baxter Magolda, E. Creamer, & P. Meszaros (Eds.), *Development and assessment of self-authorship: Exploring the concept across cultures* (pp. 3-24). Sterling, Virginia: Stylus.

- Bondy, E., Ross, D., Adams, A., Nowak, R., Brownell, M., Hopper, D.,...Stafford, L. (2007). Personal epistemologies and learning to teach. *Teacher Education and Special Education: The Journal of Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children*, 30, 67-82.
- Bowen, G. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9(2), 27-40. doi: 10.3316/QRJ0902027.
- Brown, M., & Bergen, D. (2002). Play and social interaction of children with disabilities at learning/activity centers in an inclusive preschool. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 17(1), 26-37.
- Brownlee, J. (2001). Epistemological beliefs in pre-service teacher education students. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 20(3), 281-291.
- Brownlee, J., Berthelsen, D., & Boulton-Lewis, G. (2004). Working with toddlers in child care: Personal epistemologies and practice. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 12(1), 55-70. doi: 10.1080/13502930485209311.
- Brownlee, J., Bethelsen, D., & Boulton-Lewis, G. (2010). Toward self-authorship in child care students: Implications for working with children and their families. In M. Baxter Magolda, E. Creamer & P. Meszaros (Eds.), *Development and assessment of Self-authorship: Exploring the concept across cultures*. Sterling, Virginia: Stylus.
- Brownlee, J., Boulton-Lewis, G., & Berthelsen, D. (2008). Epistemological beliefs in child care: Implications for vocational education. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 78, 457-471.
- Brownlee, J., Edwards, A., Berthelsen, D., & Boulton-Lewis, G. (2011). Self-authorship in child care student teachers: Is there a link between beliefs and practice? In J. Brownlee, G. Schraw, & D. Berthelsen (Eds.), *Personal epistemology and teacher education* (pp. 68-83). New York: Routledge.
- Brownlee, J., Schraw, G., & Berthelsen, D. (2011a). Personal epistemology and teacher education: An emerging field of research. In J. Brownlee, G. Schraw & D. Berthelsen (Eds.), *Personal epistemology and teacher education* (pp. 3-21). New York: Routledge.
- Brownlee, J., Syu, J., Mascadri, J., Cobb-Moore, C., Walker, S., Johansson, E.,... Ailwood, J. (2012). Teachers' and children's personal epistemologies for moral education: Case studies in early years elementary education. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 28(3), 440-450.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. doi:10.1191/1478088706qp063oa.
- Bruns, D., & Mogharreban, C. (2007). The gap between beliefs and practices: Early childhood practitioners' perceptions about inclusion. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 21(3), 229-241.

- Buell, J., Gamel-McCormick, M., & Hallam, R. (1999). Inclusion in a childcare context: Experiences and attitudes of family childcare providers. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 19*, 217-224.
- Buetow, S. (2010). Thematic analysis and its reconceptualization as 'saliency analysis'. *Journal of Health Services Research and Policy, 15*(2), 123-125. doi:10.1258/jhsrp.2009.009081.
- Buyse, V., & Bailey, D. (1993). Behavioral and developmental outcomes in young children with disabilities in integrated and segregated settings: A review of comparative studies. *The Journal of Special Education, 26*(4), 434-461. doi:10.1177/002246699302600407.
- Buyse, V., & Hollingsworth, H. L. (2009). Program quality and early childhood inclusion: Recommendations for professional development. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 29*(2), 119-128. doi:10.1177/0271121409332233.
- Buyse, V., Goldman, B. D., & Skinner, M. L. (2003). Friendship formation in inclusive early childhood classrooms: What is the teacher's role? *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 18*(4), 485-501. doi:10.1016/j.ecresq.2003.09.007.
- Buyse, V., Wesley, P., & Keyes, L. (1998). Implementing early childhood inclusion: Barrier and support factors. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 13*(1), 169-184. doi:10.1016/S0885-2006(99)80031-3.
- Cartmel, J., Macfarlane, K., Casley, M., & Early Childhood Australia. (2012). *Reflection as a tool for quality: Working with the national quality standard*. Deakin West, A.C.T: Early Childhood Australia.
- Centre for Parent Resources. (2014). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004. Retrieved from <http://www.parentcenterhub.org/repository/idea-copies/>.
- Chadwick, B., Gill, P., Stewart, K., & Treasure, E. (2008). Methods of data collection in qualitative research: Interviews and focus groups. *Bdj, 204*(6), 291-295. doi:10.1038/bdj.2008.192.
- Chang, F., Early, D., & Winton, P. (2005). Early childhood teacher preparation in special education at 2- and 4-year institutions of higher education. *Journal of Early Intervention, 27*(2), 110-124. doi:10.1177/105381510502700206.
- Clough, P., & Nutbrown, C. (2004). Special educational needs and inclusion: Multiple perspectives of preschool educators in the UK. *Journal of Early Childhood Research, 2*(2), 191-21. doi: 10.1177/1476718X04043015.
- Cologon, K. (2014). Preventing inclusion? inclusive early childhood education and the option to exclude. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 15*(4), 378-381. doi:10.2304/ciec.2014.15.4.378.

- Commonwealth of Australia. (2013). Disability Discrimination Act 1992. Retrieved from <http://www.comlaw.gov.au/details/c2013c00022>.
- Commonwealth of Australia. (2009). *Belonging, being and becoming: The early years learning framework*. Canberra: Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.
- Conrad, D., & Brown, L. (2011). Fostering inclusive education: Principles' perspectives in Trinidad and Tobago. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 15(9), 1017-1029. doi: 10.1080/13603110903490721.
- Cooley, A. (2013). Qualitative research in education: The origins, debates, and politics of creating knowledge. *Educational Studies: A Journal of the American Educational Studies Association*, 49(3), 247-262. doi: 10.1080/00131946.2013.783834.
- Cousin, G. (2005). Case study research. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 29(3), 421-427.
- Creamer, E. G., & Laughlin, A. (2005). Self-authorship and women's career decision making. *Journal of College Student Development*, 46(1), 13-27. doi:10.1353/csd.2005.0002.
- Creswell, J. (2007). *Qualitative enquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, C.A: Sage.
- Creswell, J. (2014). *Educational Research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4th ed.). Boston: Pearson.
- Crowe, S., Cresswell, K., Robertson, A., Huby, G., Avery, A., & Sheikh, A. (2011). The case study approach. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, 11(1), 100-100. doi:10.1186/1471-2288-11-100.
- Darrow, A. (2009). Barriers to effective inclusion and strategies to overcome them. *General Music Today*, 22(3), 29-31.
- Dempsey, N. P. (2010). Stimulated recall interviews in ethnography. *Qualitative Sociology*, 33(3), 349-367. doi:10.1007/s11133-010-9157-x.
- Denscombe, M., (2010). *Good research guide: For small scale social research projects* (4th ed.). Berkshire, UK: Open University Press.
- Denzin, N., & Smith, Y. (1998). Introduction: Entering the field of qualitative research. In N. Denzin & Y. Smith (Eds.), *Strategies of qualitative inquiry* (pp. 1-34). London: Sage.
- Department for Education. (2012). *Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage: Setting the standards for learning, development and care for children birth to five*. London: Department for Education.

- Department of Education & Training [DET]. (2016). Inclusion Support Programme Guidelines for 2016-2017 to 2018-2019. Retrieved from <https://www.education.gov.au/inclusion-support-programme>.
- Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations [DEEWR]. (2009). *Belonging, being & becoming. The early years learning framework for Australia*. Canberra, ACT: Commonwealth of Australia.
- Department of Industry. (2014). CHC50113 Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care. Retrieved from <http://training.gov.au/Training/Details/CHC50113?releaseId=4ec3d180-6c3c-4ec1-98ed-dd80836000ac>.
- De Vore, S., & Russell, K. (2007). Early childhood education and care for children with disabilities: Facilitating inclusive practice. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 35(2), 189-198. doi: 10.1007/s10643-006-0145-4.
- Diamond, K., & Carpenter, E. (2000). Participation in inclusive preschool programs and sensitivity to the needs of others. *Journal of Early Intervention*, 23(2), 81-91. doi:10.1177/105381510002300203.
- Diamond, K. E., & Huang, H. (2005). Preschoolers' ideas about disabilities. *Infants and Young Children*, 18(1), 37-46. doi:10.1097/00001163-200501000-00005.
- Division for Early Childhood/National Association for the Education for Young Children. (2009). *Early childhood inclusion: A joint position statement of the division for early childhood (DEC) and the national association for the education of young children (NAEYC)*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina.
- Dowling, M. (2006). Approaches to reflexivity in qualitative research. *Nurse Researcher*, 13(3), 7-21.
- Dunn, L. M. (1968). Special education for the mildly retarded: Is much of it justifiable? *Exceptional children*, 35, 5-22.
- Early Childhood Australia [ECA]. (2011). Early Childhood Education and Care in Australia: A discussion paper – prepared for the European Union-Australia Policy Dialogue, 11–15 April 2011. Retrieved from http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/pdf/eca_papers/eca_early_childhood_education_and_care_policypaper.pdf.
- Early Childhood Australia [ECA]. (2012). Position statement on the inclusion of children with a disability in early childhood education and care. Retrieved from http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/position_statements/inclusion-of-children-with-a-disability-in-early-childhood-education-and-care.html.
- Edwards, A. (2014). *The professional identity of child care practitioners: Self-authorship as a theoretical framework* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <http://eprints.qut.edu.au/>.

- Eiserman, W., Shisler, L. & Healey, S. (1995). A community assessment of preschool providers' attitudes toward inclusion. *Journal of Early Intervention*, 19(2), 149-167. doi:10.1177/105381519501900208.
- Elo, S., & Kyngas, H. (2008). The qualitative content analysis process. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 62(1), 107-115. doi: 10.1111/j.1365-2648.2007.04569.x.
- Ennis, R. (1993). Critical thinking assessment. *Theory into Practice*, 32(3), 179-186.
- Essa, E., Bennett, P., Burnham, M., Martin, S., Bingham, A., & Allred, K. (2008). Do variables associated with quality child care programs predict the inclusion of children with disabilities? *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, 28(3), 171-180. doi:10.1177/0271121408324447.
- Fallar, R. (2014). *Meaning-making among medical students: Development of a quantitative measure of self-authorship* (Order No. 3619811). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (1536478414). Retrieved from <http://gateway.library.qut.edu.au/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.ezp01.library.qut.edu.au/docview/1536478414?accountid=13380>.
- Fenech, M., Giugni, M., & Bown, K. (2012). A critical analysis of the national quality framework: Mobilising for a vision for children beyond minimum standards. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 37 (4), 5-14.
- Flyvbjerg, B. (2011). Case study. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (4th ed., pp. 301-316). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Forsey, M. (2012). Interviewing individuals. In S. Delamont (Ed.). *Handbook of qualitative research in education* (pp. 364-376). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited.
- Fram, S. (2013). The constant comparative analysis method outside of grounded theory. *The Qualitative Report*, 18(1), 1-25.
- Frankel, E. B., Gold, S., & Ajodhia-Andrews, A. (2010). International preschool inclusion: Bridging the gap between vision and practices. *Young Exceptional Children*, 13(5), 2-16. doi:10.1177/1096250610379983.
- Freebody, P (2006). *Qualitative research in education: Interaction and practice*. London: Sage.
- Fyssa, A., Vlachou, A., & Avramidis, E. (2014). Early childhood teachers' understanding of inclusive education and associated practices: Reflections from greece. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 22(2), 223-237. doi:10.1080/09669760.2014.909309.
- Galea, S. (2012). Reflecting reflective practice. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 44(3), 245-258. doi:10.1111/j.1469-5812.2010.00652.x.

- Gallagher, P., & Lambert, R. (2006). Classroom quality, concentration of children with special needs, and child outcomes in head start. *Exceptional Children*, 73(1), 31-52.
- Galletta, A. (2013). *Mastering the semi-structured interview and beyond: From research design to analysis and publication* [EBL version]. Retrieved from <http://www.qut.eblib.com.au.ezp01.library.qut.edu.au/patron/FullRecord.aspx?p=1187368&echo=1&userid=bzPJGpbAhKp9uHY9NWXrWg%3d%3d&tstamp=1394998094&id=A91EADef74244E4A6ECDEF48160E57D2A43150C1>.
- Gay, L., Mills, G., & Airasian, P. (2009). *Educational research: Competencies for analysis and applications* (9th ed.). Upper Saddle River, N.J: Pearson Education.
- Gillham, B. (2000). *Case study research methods*. London: Continuum International Publishing.
- Given, L. (2008). Observation schedule. In L. Given (Ed.). *The SAGE encyclopedia of qualitative research methods* (p 577). Thousand Oaks: Sage. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412963909.n296>.
- Goldkuhl, G. (2012). Pragmatism vs interpretivism in qualitative information systems research. *European Journal of Information Systems*, 21, 135-146. doi:10.1057/ejis.2011.54.
- Grace, R., Llewellyn, G., Wedgwood, N., Fenech, M., & McConnell, D. (2008). Far from ideal: Everyday experiences of mothers and early childhood professionals negotiating and inclusive early childhood experience in the Australian context. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, 28(1), 18-30. doi: 10.1177/0271121407313525.
- Gray, C. (2013) Reflective practice: experiential learning in the early years. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 21(1), 1-3. doi: 10.1080/09669760.2013.782971.
- Gruenberg, A., & Miller, R. (2011). *A practical guide to early childhood inclusion*. New York: Pearson.
- Guba, E. (1990). The alternative paradigm dialog. In E. Guba (Ed.). *The paradigm dialog* (pp. 17-30). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Guba, E., & Lincoln, Y. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 105-117). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Gubrium, J., & Holstein, J. (2000). Analyzing interpretive practice. *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2, 487-508.

- Guralnick, M. (1994). Mothers' perceptions of the benefits and drawbacks of early childhood mainstreaming. *Journal of Early Intervention*, 18(2), 168-183. doi:10.1177/105381519401800205.
- Guralnick, M. (2000). An agenda for change in early childhood inclusion. *Journal of Early Intervention*, 23(4), 213-222. doi:10.1177/10538151000230040101.
- Guralnick, M., Hammond, M., Connor, R., & Neville, B. (2006). Stability, change, and correlates of the peer relationships of young children with mild developmental delays. *Child Development*, 77(2), 312-324. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8624.2006.00872.x.
- Hallahan, D., & Kauffman, J. (2003). *Exceptional children: Introduction to special education* (9th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Harcourt, D., & Einarsdottir, J. (2011). Introducing children's perspectives and participation in research. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 19(3), 301-307. doi:10.1080/1350293X.2011.597962.
- Hauser-Cram, P., Bronson, M., & Upshur, C. (1993). The effects of the classroom environment on the social and mastery behavior of preschool children with disabilities. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 8, 479-498. doi:10.1016/S0885-2006(05)80081-X.
- Hawkins, K. (2014). Teaching for social justice, social responsibility and social inclusion: A respectful pedagogy for twenty-first century early childhood education. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 22(5), 723-738. doi:10.1080/1350293X.2014.969085.
- Hestenes, L., & Carroll, D. (2000). The play interactions of young children with and without disabilities: Individual and environmental influences. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 15(2), 229-246. doi:10.1016/S0885-2006(00)00052-1.
- Hogan, M. (2013). *Self-authorship: A qualitative study on early childhood teacher intellectual development* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <http://eprints.qut.edu.au/>.
- Hollingsworth, H., Able Boone, H., & Crais, E. (2009). Individualized inclusion plans at work in early childhood classrooms. *Young Exceptional Children*, 13(1), 19-35. doi:10.1177/1096250609347259.
- Houghton, C., Casey, D., Shaw, D., & Murphy, K. (2013). Rigour in qualitative case-study research. *Nurse Researcher*, 20(4), 12-17.
- Huang, H., & Diamond, K. (2009). Early childhood teachers' ideas about including children with disabilities in programmes designed for typically developing children. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education*, 56(2), 169-182. doi:10.1080/10349120902868632.

- Hughes, P. (2001). Paradigms, methods and knowledge. In G. Mac Naughton, S. Rolfe & Siraj-Blatchford (Eds.), *Doing early childhood research: International perspectives on theory and practice* (pp. 31-55). Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin.
- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) (1986–2004). Australian anti-discrimination and disability discrimination legislation. Retrieved from <http://www.hreoc.gov.au/about/legislation/index.html>.
- Johnson, J. (2013). Self-authorship in pharmacy education. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*, 77(4), 1-6. doi:10.5688/ajpe77469.
- Jordan, A., Schwartz, E., & McGhie-Richmond, D. (2009). Preparing teachers for inclusive classrooms. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 25, 535-542. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2009.02.010.
- Kalyanpur, M. (2011). Paradigm and paradox: Education for all and the inclusion of children with disabilities in Cambodia. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 15(10), 1053-1071. doi:10.1080/13603116.2011.555069.
- Kegan, R. (1994). *In over our heads: The mental demands of modern life*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Kemp, C. R. (2016). Early childhood inclusion in Australia. *Infants & Young Children*, 29(3), 178-187. doi:10.1097/IYC.0000000000000062.
- Kervin, L., Vialle, W., Herrington, J., & Okely, T. (2006). *Research for educators*. South Melbourne: Thomson, Social Science Press.
- King, P., & Kitchener, K. (1994). *Developing reflective judgment: Understanding and promoting intellectual growth and critical thinking in adolescents and adults*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.
- Kitchener, K., & King, P., (1981). Reflective judgement: Concepts of justification and their relationship to age and education. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 2(2), 89-116. doi:10.1016/0193-3973(81)90032-0.
- Kuhn, D., & Udell, W. (2007). Coordinating own and other perspectives in argument. *Thinking & Reasoning*, 13(2), 90-104. doi:10.1080/13546780600625447.
- Leech, N., & Onwuegbuzie, A. (2007). An array of qualitative data analysis tools: A call for data analysis triangulation. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 22(4), 557-584. doi:10.1037/1045-3830.22.4.557.
- Lieber, J., Caper, K., Sandall, S., Wolfberg, P., Horn, E., & Beckman, P. (1998). Inclusive preschool programs: Teachers' beliefs and practices. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 13(1), 87-105. doi:10.1016/S0885-2006(99)80027-1.
- Lindsay, G. (2007). Educational psychology and the effectiveness of inclusive education/mainstreaming. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 77, 1-24. doi:10.1348/000709906X156881.

- Llewellyn, G., Thompson, K., & Fante, M. (2002). Inclusion in early childhood services: Ongoing challenges. *Australian Journal of Early Childhood*, 27(3), 18-23.
- Mackenzie, M., Cologon, K., & Fenech, M. (2016). 'embracing everybody': Approaching the inclusive early childhood education of a child labelled with autism from a social relational understanding of disability. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 41(2), 4-12.
- Mac Naughton, G., Rolfe, S., & Siraj-Blatchford, I. (2001). *Doing early childhood research: International perspectives on theory and practice*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin.
- Marbina, L., Church, A., & Tayler, C. (2010). Victorian early years learning and development framework: Practice principle 8: Reflective practice. Retrieved from <https://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/earlylearning/evi-refprac.pdf>.
- Mascadri, J., Brownlee, J. L., Walker, S., & Alford, J. (2016). Exploring intercultural competence through the lens of self-authorship. *Early Years*, 1-18. doi:10.1080/09575146.2016.1174930.
- Meszaros, P. S. (2007). The journey of self-authorship: Why is it necessary? In P. S. Meszaros (Ed.), *Self-authorship: Advancing student's intellectual growth: New Directions for Teaching and Learning* (pp. 5-14). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-bass.
- Miller, M., Nicholas, E., & Lambeth, M. (2008). Pre-service teachers' critical reflections of arts and education discourse: Reconstructions of experiences in early childhood and higher education. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 9(4), 354-364. doi:10.2304/ciec.2008.9.4.354.
- Mills, M. (2008). Comparative Analysis. In L. Given (Ed.). *The SAGE encyclopedia of qualitative research methods* (p 101). Thousand Oaks: Sage. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412963909.n54>.
- Mills, P., Cole, K., Jenkins, J., & Dale, P. (1998). Effects of differing levels of inclusion on preschoolers with disabilities. *Exceptional Children*, 65(1), 79-90.
- Mohay, H., & Reid, E. (2006). The inclusion of children with a disability in child care: The influence of experience, training and attitudes of childcare staff. *Australian Journal of Early Childhood*, 31(1), 35-42.
- Moore, T. (2013). Critical thinking: Seven definitions in search of a concept. *Studies in Higher Education*, 38(4), 506-522. doi: 10.1080/03075079.2011.586995.
- Muccio, L., Kidd, J., White, S., & Burns, S. (2014). Head Start instructional professionals' inclusion perceptions and practices. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, 34 (1), 40-48. doi:10.1177/0271121413502398.
- Mulvihill, B., Shearer, D., & Van Horn, M. (2002). Training, experience, and childcare providers' perceptions of inclusion. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 17, 197-215.

- National Association for the Education of Young Children [NAEYC]. (2009). Early childhood inclusion: A Summary. *Young Exceptional Children*, 13(1), 52-53. doi: 10.1177/1096250609347736.
- Nutbrown, C., & Clough, P. (2009). Citizenship and inclusion in the early years: Understanding and responding to children's perspectives on 'belonging'. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 17(3), 191-206. doi:10.1080/09669760903424523.
- Nutbrown, C., Clough, P., & Atherton, F. (2010). *Inclusion in the early years* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.
- Odom, S. (2009). The tie that binds: Evidence-based practice, implementation, science, and outcomes for children. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, 29(1), 53-61. doi:10.1177/0271121408329171.
- Odom, S., Buysee, V., & Soukakou, E. (2011). Inclusion for young children with Disabilities: A quarter century of research perspectives. *Journal of Early Intervention*, 33(4), 344-356. doi:10.1177/1053815111430094.
- Odom, S., & Diamond, K. (1998). Inclusion of young children with special needs in early childhood education: The research base. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 13(1), 3-25. doi:10.1016/S0885-2006(99)80023-4.
- Odom, S., Hanson, M., Lieber, J., Marquart, J., Sandall, S., Wolery, R.,... Chambers, J. (2001). The costs of preschool inclusion. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, 21(1), 46-55. doi:10.1177/027112140102100104.
- Odom, S., Horn, E., Marquart, J., Hanson, M., Wolfberg, P., Beckman, P.,... Sandall, S. (1999). On the forms of inclusion: Organizational context and service delivery models. *Journal of Early Interventions*, 22, 185-199. doi:10.1177/105381519902200301.
- Oliver-Hoyo, M., & Allen, D. (2006). The use of triangulation methods in qualitative educational research. *Journal of College Science Teaching*, 35(4), 42-47.
- Onwuegbuzie, A., Leech, N., & Collins, K. (2010). Innovative data collection strategies in qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report*, 15(3), 696-726.
- Orgun, F., & Karaoz, B. (2014). Epistemological beliefs and the self-efficacy scale in nursing students. *Nurse Education Today*, 34(6), 37-40. doi:10.1016/j.nedt.2013.11.007.
- Osgood, J. (2012). *Narratives from the nursery: Negotiating professional identities early childhood*. London: Routledge.
- Pearrow, M., & Sanchez, W. (2008). Personal epistemology of urban elementary school teachers. *Education and Urban Society*, 40(2), 226-242. doi:10.1177/0013124507304169.

- Peisner-Feinberg, E., & Burchinal, M. (1997). Relations between preschool children's childcare experiences and concurrent development: The cost, quality, and outcomes study. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly*, 43(3), 451-477.
- Petriwskyj, A. (2010). Diversity and inclusion in the early years. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 14(2), 195-212. doi:10.1080/13603110802504515.
- Perry, W. (1981). Cognitive and ethical growth: The making of meaning. In A. Chickering (Ed.), *The Modern American College* (pp. 76-116). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Boss.
- Pianta, R., Barnett, S., Burchinal, M., & Thornburg, K. (2009). The effects of preschool education: What we know, how public policy is or is not aligned with the evidence base and what we need to know. *Psychological Science*, 10(2), 49-88. doi:10.1177/1529100610381908.
- Pizzolato, J. (2003). Developing self-authorship: Exploring the experiences of high risk college students. *Journal of College Student Development*, 44(6), 797-812. doi:10.1353/csd.2003.0074.
- Pizzolato, J. E. (2005). Creating crossroads for self-authorship: Investigating the provocative moment. *Journal of College Student Development*, 46(6), 624-641. doi:10.1353/csd.2005.0064.
- Poni, M. (2014). Research paradigms in education. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, 4(1), 407-413.
- Ponterotto, J. (2005). Qualitative research in counseling psychology : A primer on research paradigms and philosophy of science. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 52(2), 126-136. doi:10.1037/0022-0167.52.2.126.
- Proctor, R., & Niemeyer, J. (2001). Preservice beliefs about inclusion: Implications for early intervention workers. *Journal of Early Intervention*, 24(1), 55-66. doi:10.1177/105381510102400108.
- Purdue, K. (2009). Barriers to and facilitators of inclusion for children with disabilities in early childhood education. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 10(2), 133-143. doi:10.2304/ciec.2009.10.2.133.
- Purdue, K., Gordon-Burns, D., Rarere-Briggs, B., Stark, R., & Tumock, K. (2011). The exclusion of children with disabilities in early childhood education in New Zealand: Issues and implications for inclusion. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 36(2), 95-103.
- Rafferty, Y., Boettcher, C., & Griffin, K. (2001). Benefits and risks of reverse inclusion for preschoolers with and without disabilities: Parents' perspectives. *Journal of Early Intervention*, 24(4), 266-286. doi:10.1177/105381510102400403.

- Rafferty, Y., & Griffin, K. (2005). Benefits and risks of reverse inclusion for preschoolers with and without disabilities: Parents' perspectives. *Journal of Early Intervention*, 27(3), 173-192. doi:10.1177/105381510502700305.
- Rafferty, Y., Piscitelli, V., & Boettcher, C. (2003). The impact of inclusion on language development and social competence among preschoolers with disabilities. *Exceptional Children*, 69(4), 467-479.
- Reitveld, C. (2010). Early childhood inclusion: The hidden curriculum of peer relationships. *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*, 45(1), 17-32.
- Riojas-Cortez, M., Alanis, I., & Bustos Flores, B. (2013). Early childhood teachers reconstruct beliefs and practices through reflexive action. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education*, 34(1), 36-45. doi:10.1080/10901027.2013.758536.
- Rix, J., & Paige-Smith, A. (2011). Exploring barriers to reflection and learning – developing a perspective lens. *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, 11(1), 30–41. doi:10.1111/j.1471-3802.2010.01185.x.
- Roffman, L., & Wanerman, T. (2011). *Including one, including all: A guide to relationship-based early childhood inclusion*. St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press.
- Roth, G., & Weinstock, M. (2013). Teachers' epistemological beliefs as an antecedent of autonomy-supportive teaching. *Motivation and Emotion*, 37(3), 402-412. doi:10.1007/s11031-012-9338-x.
- Rubin, H., & Rubin, I. (2012). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data* (3rd ed.). London: Sage.
- Sandelowski, M. (2008). Member check. In L. Given (Ed.). *The SAGE encyclopaedia of Qualitative Research Methods* (pp. 502-503). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412963909.n257>.
- Schommer, M. (1994). Synthesizing epistemological belief research: Tentative understandings and provocative confusions. *Educational Psychology Review*, 6(4), 293-319. doi:10.1007/BF02213418.
- Schwandt, T. (2007). Member check. In T. Schwandt (Ed.). *The SAGE encyclopaedia of Qualitative Inquiry* (pp. 189-190). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412986281>.
- Silverman, J. (2007). Epistemological beliefs and attitudes: Toward inclusion in pre-service teachers. *Teacher Education and Special Education*, 30(1), 42-51. doi:10.1177/088840640703000105.
- Simons, H. (2009). *Case study research in practice*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Smet, M., Keer, H., Wever, B., & Valcke, M. (2010). Studying thought processes of online peer tutors through stimulated-recall interviews. *Higher Education*, 59(5), 645-661. doi:10.1007/s10734-009-9273-2.

- Smith, B., Hemmeter, M., & Sandall, S. (2006). What do I do with the division for early childhood recommended practices?: Tips for using the practices in the early childhood setting. *Young Exceptional Children*, 9(4), 22-33. doi:10.1177/109625060600900403.
- Stacey, P., Brownlee, J., Thorpe, K., & Reeves, D. (2005). Measuring and manipulating epistemological beliefs in early childhood education students. *International Journal of Pedagogies and Learning*, 1(1), pp. 6-17. doi:10.5172/ijpl.1.1.6.
- Stake, R. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Stake, R. (2006). *Multiple case study analysis*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Stahmer, A., Akshoomoff, N., & Cunningham, L. (2011). Inclusion for toddlers with autism spectrum disorders: The first ten years of a community program. *Autism*, 15(5), 625-641. doi:10.1177/1362361310392253.
- Stahmer, A., & Ingersoll, B. (2004). Inclusive programming for toddlers with autism spectrum disorders: Outcomes from the children's toddler school. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 6(2), 67-82. doi:10.1177/10983007040060020201.
- Stamopoulos, E. (2012). Reframing early childhood leadership. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 37(2), 42-48.
- Stewart, J. (2012). Multiple-case study methods in governance-related research. *Public Management Review*, 14(1), 67-82, doi: 10.1080/14719037.2011.589618.
- Stonehouse, A., & Boschetti, C. (2013). *A piece of cake: Linking inclusive practice to the EYLF and the VEYLDF*. Preston: Worldwide Online Printing.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (2nd ed). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Su'o'ng, T., & Nguyen, T. (2008). Peer debriefing. In L. Given (Ed.). *The SAGE encyclopaedia of Qualitative Research Methods* (p 605). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412963909.n312>.
- Sylva, K., Siraj-Blatchford, I., Taggart, B., Sammons, P., Melhuish, E., Elliot, K., & Totsika, V. (2006). Capturing quality in early childhood through environmental rating scales. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 21(1), 67-92. doi:10.1016/j.ecresq.2006.01.003.
- Thomas, E., & Magilvy, J. (2011). Qualitative rigor or research validity in qualitative research. *Journal for Specialists in Pediatric Nursing*, 16(2), 151-155. doi:10.1111/j.1744-6155.2011.00283.x.

- Thornton, C., & Underwood, K. (2013). Conceptualisations of disability and inclusion: perspectives of educators of young children. *Early Years: An International Research Journal*, 33(1) 59-73. doi: 10.1080/09575146.2012.682975.
- Underwood, K. & Frankel, E. (2012). Early intervention in Canada: The Developmental systems model in Ontario. *Infants & Young Children*, 25(4), 286-296.
- United Nations [UN]. (1989) Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). Retrieved from www.unicef.com.
- United Nations [UN]. (2006). Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities. Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?navid=12&pid=150>.
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO]. (1994). Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education. Retrieved from http://www.unesco.de/fileadmin/medien/Dokumente/Bildung/Salamanca_Declaration.pdf.
- Vakil, S., Freeman, R., & Swim, T. (2003). The Reggio Emilia approach and inclusive early childhood programs. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 30(3), 187-192. doi:10.1023/A:1022022107610.
- Vaismoradi, M., Turunen, H., & Bondas, T. (2013). Content analysis and thematic analysis: Implications for conducting a qualitative descriptive study. *Nursing & Health Sciences*, 15(3), 398-405. doi:10.1111/nhs.12048.
- Valenides, N., & Angeli, C. (2005). Effects of instruction on changes in epistemological beliefs. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 30(3), 314-330. doi:10.1016/j.cedpsych.2005.01.001.
- Walker, S., & Berthelsen, D. (2008). Children with autistic spectrum disorder in early childhood education and care programs: A social constructivist perspective on inclusion. *International Journal of Early Childhood*, 40(1), 33-51. doi:10.1007/BF03168362.
- Warming, H. (2011). Inclusive discourses in early childhood education? *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 15(2), 233-247. doi:10.1080/13603110902783365.
- Webster, A., & Forster, J. (2012). *Participating and belonging: Inclusion in practice*. Malvern Vic: Noah's Ark.
- Willis, J. (2007). *Foundations of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Wong, S., & Cumming, T. (2010). Family day care is for normal kids : Facilitators and barriers to the inclusion of children with disabilities in family day care. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 35(3), 4-12.

- Wong, S., & Turner, K. (2014). Constructions of social inclusion within Australian early childhood education and care policy documents. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 15(1), 54-68. doi:10.2304/ciec.2014.15.1.54.
- Wood, J., Cowan, P., & Baker, B. (2002). Behavior problems and peer rejection in preschool boys and girls. *The Journal of Genetic Psychology*, 163(1), 72-88. doi:10.1080/00221320209597969.
- Megan Woods, Rob Macklin & Gemma K. Lewis (2016) Researcher reflexivity: exploring the impacts of CAQDAS use, *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 19:4, 385-403, DOI: 10.1080/13645579.2015.1023964.
- Yilmaz, K. (2013). Comparison of quantitative and qualitative research traditions: Epistemological, theoretical, and methodological differences. *European Journal of Education*, 48(2), 311-325. doi:10.1111/ejed.12014.
- Yin, R. (2003). *Case study research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Zhang, K. (2011). Early childhood education and special education: How well do they mix? an examination of inclusive practices in early childhood educational settings in Hong Kong. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 15(6), 683-697, doi: 10.1080/13603110903317676.

Appendices

Appendix A: Participant Recruitment and Consent Information

Subject Title:

Participate in a research study into the inclusion of children with diverse needs in early childhood education and care (ECEC)

Dear Centre Director

My name is Troy Dunn from the Faculty of Education at Queensland University of Technology (QUT). I am doing a Masters study into the inclusion of children with diverse needs in early childhood education and care (ECEC).

I am currently inviting an early childhood service and educators to participate in this research project and would really welcome (Early childhood service name) and your educators' involvement. The aim of this study is to investigate how ECEC educators experience the inclusion of children with diverse needs in the ECEC learning environment. It is also anticipated that this study will provide new understandings about what ECEC educators think and experience regarding the inclusion of children with diverse needs.

As the Centre Director your consent would be required for me to enter the centre and access five early childhood educators to participate in this research project. Initially, I will conduct observations of the educators' daily practice, over a three day period.. Each observation will be followed by a 10-15 minute interview to discuss key observations. The interview will be conducted at a convenient time for the educators (e.g. during the children's rest time) The educators will then be asked to take part in two individual interviews over a two week period that will be scheduled at a time and location convenient to them..The first interview will take approximately 25 minutes while the second interview will take approximately 40 minutes. Finally, document analysis of centre specific pedagogical documentation such as the daily program and educator reflections will be used to record the planning of the educators. This study has been designed with consideration for educators' busy work commitments and aims not to disrupt the centre's and educators' daily routines.

Please view the attached Director information/consent document for further details on the study and how your ECEC service can participate. If you are interested in your service participating in this research project can you please pass the attached educator information/consent document onto your educators for their consideration.

Please note that this study has been approved by the QUT Human Research Ethics Committee (approval number 1400000897).

I would greatly appreciate (Early childhood service name) participation in this important project. Should you wish to participate or have any questions, please contact me via phone or email.

Many thanks for your consideration of this request.

Kind regards

Troy Dunn

Masters Student

0439 728 737

tw.dunn@hdr.qut.edu.au

Prof Sue Walker

Principal Supervisor

+61 7 3138 3195

sue.walker@qut.edu.au

Prof Joanne Lunn

Associate Supervisor

+61 7 3138 3333

j.lunn@qut.edu.au

**Inclusion of children with diverse needs in early childhood education and care (ECEC) services:
Exploring inclusive practice through self-authorship**

QUT Ethics Approval Number 1400000897

RESEARCH TEAM

Principal Researcher: Troy Dunn, Masters student
Associate Researchers: Prof Sue Walker, Prof Joanne Lunn, Research Supervisors
Early Childhood, Faculty of Education, Queensland University of Technology (QUT)

DESCRIPTION

This project is being undertaken as part of a Masters study for Troy Dunn, under the supervision of Prof Sue Walker and Prof Joanne Lunn.

The purpose of this research is to investigate how Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) educators experience the inclusion of children with diverse needs in the ECEC learning environment. It is also anticipated that this study will provide new understandings of what ECEC educators think and experience regarding the inclusion of children with diverse needs. Interviews, observations and documents will be collected from five early childhood educators at your centre to allow for a diverse understanding of early childhood educators' experiences of the inclusion of children with diverse need in ECEC.

Your ECEC service is invited to participate in this research project because this study seeks to explore early childhood educators' own perspectives and experiences working with children with diverse needs.

PARTICIPATION

The participation of your service in this research study will require the researcher to access five educators working in a range of roles such as room leaders and assistants, and who hold a range of qualifications. Initially the researcher will conduct observations of the educators' daily practice over a three day period, which will be documented using field notes.

The researcher will spend 2-4 hours per day in the room that the educators are working in, to enable an overview of the whole day and develop an understanding of the learning environment. The observations will be followed by three 10-15 minute interviews to discuss key observations. These will be conducted at a convenient time for the educators (e.g. during the children's rest time and will aid in understanding how educators support the inclusion of children with diverse needs.

Educators will then be required to take part in individual interviews that will be used to investigate their experiences with the inclusion of children with diverse needs. They will be interviewed twice over a two week period.

The first interview will be designed around a scenario about an issue regarding the inclusion of a child with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and will take approximately 25 minutes. Interview questions will include:

- What would you do in this situation? Why?
- Do you think there is a right answer to this situation?
- How did you would you gain more information/knowledge about this situation?

The second interview will include open-ended interview questions that will be used to investigate educators' experiences with the inclusion of children with diverse needs. This will take approximately 40 minutes. Interview questions will include:

- What experiences have you had prior to this role?
- How do you believe your prior experiences have prepared you to work with children with diverse needs?
- What does inclusion mean to you?
- Can you tell me about an important experience that you have had with the inclusion of a child with diverse needs?

Finally, document analysis of educators' pedagogical documentation such as the daily program and reflections will be used to record their curriculum planning regarding inclusion. All interviews will be audio-taped and conducted at a convenient time for you and the educators (e.g. during the children's rest period). This study has been designed with consideration for your busy schedule and aims to be as unobtrusive as possible.

The participation of your service in this project is voluntary. If you do agree for your service to participate, you can also withdraw from participation at any time during the project without comment or penalty. Your decision for your service to withdraw from this study will in no way impact upon your current or future relationship with QUT or with your early childhood centre. It is important to note that the observations and interviews are not an evaluation of educators' practice. The focus of the research is on what they think regarding the inclusion of children with diverse needs and how this is enacted.

EXPECTED BENEFITS

It is expected that this research study will not benefit you or your service directly. However, it is anticipated that it will promote new understandings into inclusive practice in the Australian ECEC long day care context, provide clarification surrounding the current beliefs and practices of early childhood educators working in a long day care service, and contribute to the knowledge of ECEC inclusion of children with diverse needs..

RISKS

There are only minor risks associated with the participation of your service in this research project, other than the day-to-day curriculum experiences. Minor risks may include:

- Inconvenience due to the time taken to engage in the semi structured interviews.
- Inconvenience of researcher being present in your ECEC learning environment.
- Possible discomfort for educators when answering questions related to an experience with the inclusion of children with diverse needs.

To minimise these potential minor risks the researcher will:

- Ensure that you understand that you are able to withdraw from the study at any time and that withdrawal will not negatively impact on your current or future relationship with QUT or with your early childhood centre.
- Avoid extra probing questions and moving onto the next question if educators are uncomfortable or distressed.
- Reduce any inconvenience caused by the interviews by conducting them at a time and location convenient to you and the ECEC service.

To minimise the inconvenience of a researcher being present in your room, the researcher will record hand written observations without participating in the room learning experiences.

QUT provides for limited free psychology, family therapy or counselling services for research participants of QUT projects who may experience discomfort or distress as a result of their participation in the research. Should you wish to access this service please contact the Clinic Receptionist of the QUT Psychology and Counselling Clinic on 3138 0999. Please indicate to the receptionist that you are a research participant.

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

All comments, responses, observations and documentation will be treated confidentially unless required by law. To ensure confidentiality, this research project will use pseudonyms or codes for your centre and educators in the observations and transcription of interviews. The documents collected will be de-identified by transcribing any information relevant to the study into a document with identifiable information replaced by a code/s related to each case. This will ensure all identifiable data is removed prior to the reporting processes. All digital data will be stored on a secure password protected server, and paper data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. Access to this data will be limited to the researcher team only and will not be used for any other purpose. After 5 years, these will be destroyed. You and your educators will also have the opportunity to check and verify comments and responses prior to final publication.

Please note that de-identified data collected in this research project may be used as comparative data in future projects or stored on an open access database for secondary analysis.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

We would like to ask you to sign a written consent form (enclosed) to confirm your agreement to participate.

QUESTIONS / FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT

If have any questions or require further information please contact one of the research team members below.

Troy Dunn	0439 728 737	tw.dunn@hdr.qut.edu.au
Sue Walker	07 3138 3195	sue.walker@qut.edu.au
Joanne Lunn	07 3138 3333	j.lunn@qut.edu.au

CONCERNS / COMPLAINTS REGARDING THE CONDUCT OF THE PROJECT

QUT is committed to research integrity and the ethical conduct of research projects. However, if you do have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project you may contact the QUT Research Ethics Unit on 07 3138 5123 or email ethicscontact@qut.edu.au. The QUT Research Ethics Unit is not connected with the research project and can facilitate a resolution to your concern in an impartial manner.

Thank you for helping with this research project. Please keep this sheet for your information.



**Inclusion of children with diverse needs in early childhood education and care (ECEC) services:
Exploring inclusive practice through self-authorship**

QUT Ethics Approval Number 1400000897

RESEARCH TEAM CONTACTS

Troy Dunn	0439 728 737	tw.dunn@hdr.qut.edu.au
Sue Walker	07 3138 3195	sue.walker@qut.edu.au
Joanne Lunn	07 3138 3333	j.lunn@qut.edu.au

STATEMENT OF CONSENT

By signing below, you are indicating that you:


- Have read and understood the information document regarding this project.
- Have had any questions answered to your satisfaction.
- Understand that if you have any additional questions you can contact the research team.
- Understand that you are free to withdraw at any time, without comment or penalty.
- Understand that you can contact the Research Ethics Unit on 07 3138 5123 or email ethicscontact@qut.edu.au if you have concerns about the ethical conduct of the project.
- Understand that the project will include audio recording.
- Understand that non-identifiable data collected in this project may be used as comparative data in future projects.
- Agree for your ECEC service to participate in the project.

Name

Signature

Date

Please return this sheet to the investigator.

 Queensland University of Technology Brisbane Australia	PARTICIPANT INFORMATION FOR QUT RESEARCH PROJECT – Educator Interview and Observation –
<p align="center"> Inclusion of children with diverse needs in early childhood education and care (ECEC) services: Exploring inclusive practice through self-authorship </p> <p align="center"> QUT Ethics Approval Number 1400000897 </p>	

RESEARCH TEAM

Principal Researcher: Troy Dunn, Masters student
 Associate Researchers: Prof Sue Walker, Prof Joanne Lunn, Research Supervisors
Early Childhood, Faculty of Education, Queensland University of Technology (QUT)

DESCRIPTION

This project is being undertaken as part of a Masters study for Troy Dunn, under the supervision of Prof Sue Walker and Prof Joanne Lunn.

The purpose of this research is to investigate how Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) educators experience the inclusion of children with diverse needs in the ECEC learning environment. It is also anticipated that this study will provide new understandings of what ECEC educators think and experience regarding the inclusion of children with diverse needs. Observations, interviews and documents will be collected from five early childhood educators at your centre to allow for a diverse understanding of early childhood educators' experiences.

You are invited to participate in this research project because you are an ECEC educator with experience in the inclusion of children with diverse needs.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation will involve the researcher initially conducting observations of your daily practice over a three day period, which will be documented using field notes. With your permission, the researcher will spend 2-4 hours per day in the room that you are working in, to enable an overview of the whole day and develop an understanding of the learning environment. The observations will be followed by three 10-15 minute interviews to discuss key observations. These will be conducted at a convenient time for you (e.g. during the children's rest time)

You will then be invited to take part in individual interviews that will be used to investigate your experiences with the inclusion of children with diverse needs. You would be interviewed twice over a two week period. The first interview will be designed around a scenario about an issue regarding the inclusion of a child with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and will take approximately 25 minutes.

Interview questions will include:

- What would you do in this situation? Why?
- Do you think there is a right answer to this situation?
- How did you would you gain more information/knowledge about this situation?

The second interview will include open-ended interview questions about your experiences with the inclusion of children with diverse needs. This will take approximately 40 minutes.

Interview questions will include:

- What experiences have you had prior to this role?
- How do you believe your prior experiences have prepared you to work with children with diverse needs?
- What does inclusion mean to you?
- Can you tell me about an important experience that you have had with the inclusion of a child with diverse needs?

All interviews will be audio-taped and conducted at a convenient time for you (e.g. during the children's rest period). Finally, the researcher would like to collect copies of documents you use to record your curriculum, such as the daily program and reflections. This study has been designed with consideration for your busy schedule and aims to be as unobtrusive as possible.

Your participation in this project is voluntary. If you do agree to participate, you can withdraw from participation at any time during the project without comment or penalty. Your decision to withdraw from this study will in no way impact upon your current or future relationship with QUT or with your early childhood centre. It is important to note that the observations and interviews are not an evaluation of your practice. The focus of the research is on what you think regarding the inclusion of children with diverse needs and how this is enacted.

EXPECTED BENEFITS

It is expected that this research study will not benefit you or your service directly. However, it is anticipated that it will promote new insights into inclusive practice in the Australian ECEC long day care context, provide clarification surrounding the current beliefs and practices of early childhood educators working in a long day care service, and contribute to the knowledge of ECEC inclusion of children with diverse needs.

RISKS

There are only minor risks associated with your participation in this research project, other than the day-to-day curriculum experiences. Minor risks may include:

- Inconvenience due to the time taken to engage in the semi structured interviews.
- Inconvenience of a researcher being present in your ECEC learning environment.
- Possible discomfort for you when answering questions related to an experience with the inclusion of children with diverse needs.

To minimise these potential minor risks the researcher will:

- Ensure that you understand that you are able to withdraw from the study at any time and that withdrawal will not negatively impact on your current or future relationship with QUT or with your early childhood centre.
- Avoid extra probing questions and moving onto the next question if you are uncomfortable or distressed.
- Reduce any inconvenience caused by the interviews by conducting them at a time and location convenient to you and the ECEC service.

To minimise the inconvenience of a researcher being present in your room, the researcher will record observations by hand without interrupting the room learning experiences.

QUT provides for limited free psychology, family therapy or counselling services for research participants of QUT projects who may experience discomfort or distress as a result of their participation in the research. Should you wish to access this service please contact the Clinic Receptionist of the QUT Psychology and Counselling Clinic on 3138 0999. Please indicate to the receptionist that you are a research participant.

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

All comments, responses, observations and documentation will be treated confidentially unless required by law. To ensure confidentiality, this research project will use pseudonyms or codes for both you and your centre in the observations and transcription of interviews. The documents collected will be de-identified by transcribing any information relevant to the study into a document with identifiable information replaced by a code/s related to each case. This will ensure all identifiable data is removed prior to the reporting processes. All digital data will be stored on a secure password protected server, and paper data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. Access to this data will be limited to the researcher team only and will not be used for any other purpose. After 5 years, these will be destroyed. You will also have the opportunity to check and verify your comments and responses prior to final publication.

Please note that de-identified data collected in this research project may be used as comparative data in future projects or stored on an open access database for secondary analysis.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

We would like to ask you to sign a written consent form (enclosed) to confirm your agreement to participate.

QUESTIONS / FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT

If have any questions or require further information please contact one of the research team members below.

Troy Dunn	0439 728 737	tw.dunn@hdr.qut.edu.au
Sue Walker	07 3138 3195	sue.walker@qut.edu.au
Joanne Lunn	07 3138 3333	j.lunn@qut.edu.au

CONCERNS / COMPLAINTS REGARDING THE CONDUCT OF THE PROJECT

QUT is committed to research integrity and the ethical conduct of research projects. However, if you do have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project you may contact the QUT Research Ethics Unit on 07 3138 5123 or email ethicscontact@qut.edu.au. The QUT Research Ethics Unit is not connected with the research project and can facilitate a resolution to your concern in an impartial manner.

Thank you for helping with this research project. Please keep this sheet for your information.

**Inclusion of children with diverse needs in early childhood education and care (ECEC) services:
Exploring inclusive practice through self-authorship**

QUT Ethics Approval Number 1400000897

RESEARCH TEAM CONTACTS

Troy Dunn	0439 728 737	tw.dunn@hdr.qut.edu.au
Sue Walker	07 3138 3195	sue.walker@qut.edu.au
Joanne Lunn	07 3138 3333	j.lunn@qut.edu.au

STATEMENT OF CONSENT

By signing below, you are indicating that you:

- Have read and understood the information document regarding this project.
- Have had any questions answered to your satisfaction.
- Understand that if you have any additional questions you can contact the research team.
- Understand that you are free to withdraw at any time, without comment or penalty.
- Understand that you can contact the Research Ethics Unit on 07 3138 5123 or email ethicscontact@qut.edu.au if you have concerns about the ethical conduct of the project.
- Understand that the project will include audio recording.
- Understand that non-identifiable data collected in this project may be used as comparative data in future projects.
- Agree to participate in the project.

Name

Signature

Date

Please return this sheet to the investigator.



Inclusion of children with diverse needs in early childhood education and care (ECEC) services: Exploring inclusive practice through self-authorship

QUT Ethics Approval Number XXXXXX

RESEARCH TEAM

Principal Researcher: Troy Dunn, Masters student, Faculty of Education, Queensland University of Technology (QUT)
Prof Sue Walker, Prof Joanne Lunn, Research Supervisors, Faculty of Education, Queensland University of Technology (QUT)

DESCRIPTION

This project is being undertaken as part of a Masters study for Troy Dunn, under the supervision of Prof Sue Walker and Prof Joanne Lunn.

The purpose of this research is to investigate how Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) educators experience the inclusion of children with diverse needs in the ECEC learning environment. It is also anticipated that this study will provide new understandings of what ECEC educators think and experience regarding the inclusion of children with diverse needs. Observations, interviews and documents will be collected from five early childhood educators at your centre to allow for a diverse understanding of early childhood educators' experiences of the inclusion of children with diverse need in ECEC. You are invited to participate in this research project because this study seeks to explore early childhood educators' perspectives and experiences working with children with diverse needs.

PARTICIPATION

The key participants in this research project are the early childhood educators working in your child's room. However in order to gain a deep understanding of educators' experiences and practices, room observations will be used to document their daily practice. The principal researcher will initially conduct observations of the educators' daily practice over a three day period, which will be documented using hand written field notes. The researcher will spend 2-4 hours per day in the room that your child is enrolled in to enable an overview of the whole day and develop an understanding of the learning environment. Room documentation such as the daily program and educator reflections will be used to record the curriculum planning regarding inclusion.

Although your child will not be a key participant in this research project, their actions may be observed during the observations of educators' daily practices. Your child's participation in this project is voluntary and observations of educators' daily practice will not include any information regarding your child. If you do agree to participate, you can withdraw from participation at any time during the project without comment or penalty. Your decision to participate will in no way impact upon your current or future relationship with QUT or with your early childhood centre.

EXPECTED BENEFITS

It is expected that this research study will not benefit you or your service directly. However, it is anticipated that it will promote new insights into inclusive practice in the Australian ECEC long day care context, provide clarification surrounding the current beliefs and practices of early childhood educators working in a long day care service, and contribute to the knowledge of ECEC inclusion of children with diverse needs.

RISKS

There are only minor risks associated with participation in this research study, other than day-to-day room activities. To minimise the inconvenience of a researcher being present in the room hand written observations will be used and no photographs or recordings will be taken of the children. The principal researcher is an experienced early childhood educator and holds a "Positive Notice Blue Card" issued from the Commission for Children, Young People and Child Guardian.

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

All comments, responses, observations and documentation will be treated confidentially unless required by law. To ensure confidentiality, this research project will use pseudonyms or codes for both you and your centre in the observations and transcription of interviews. The documents collected will be de-identified by transcribing any information relevant to the study into a document with identifiable information replaced by a code/s related to each case. This will ensure all identifiable data is removed prior to the reporting processes. All digital data will be stored on a secure password protected server, and paper data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. Access to this data will be limited to the researcher team only and will not be used for any other purpose. After 5 years, these will be destroyed.

Please note that de-identified data collected in this research project may be used as comparative data in future projects or stored on an open access database for secondary analysis.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

To indicate your willingness for your child to participate in this project, please complete the consent form at the end of this information package. Please discuss this project with your child, and if they want to participate, can you please help them to complete their own consent form, by colouring in the smiley face.

QUESTIONS / FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT

If have any questions or require further information please contact one of the research team members below.

Name: Troy Dunn, Masters student
Phone: (04) 39728 737
Email: tw.dunn@hdr.qut.edu.au

Name: Prof Sue Walker, Research Supervisor
Phone: +61 7 3138 3195
Email: sue.walker@qut.edu.au

Name: Prof Joanne Lunn, Research Supervisor
Phone: +61 7 3138 3333
Email: j.lunn@qut.edu.au

CONCERNS / COMPLAINTS REGARDING THE CONDUCT OF THE PROJECT

QUT is committed to research integrity and the ethical conduct of research projects. However, if you do have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project you may contact the QUT Research Ethics Unit on [+61 7] 3138 5123 or email ethicscontact@qut.edu.au. The QUT Research Ethics Unit is not connected with the research project and can facilitate a resolution to your concern in an impartial manner.

Thank you for helping with this research project. Please keep this sheet for your information.

**Inclusion of children with diverse needs in early childhood education and care (ECEC) services:
Exploring inclusive practice through self-authorship**

QUT Ethics Approval Number **XXXXXX**

RESEARCH TEAM CONTACTS

Name: Troy Dunn, Masters student
Phone: (04) 39728 737
Email: tw.dunn@hdr.qut.edu.au

Name: Prof Sue Walker, Research Supervisor
Phone: +61 7 3138 3195
Email: sue.walker@qut.edu.au

Name: Prof Joanne Lunn, Research Supervisor
Phone: +61 7 3138 3333
Email: j.lunn@qut.edu.au

STATEMENT OF CONSENT

By signing below, you are indicating that you:

- Have read and understood the information document regarding this project.
- Have had any questions answered to your satisfaction.
- Understand that if you have any additional questions you can contact the research team.
- Have discussed the project with your child.
- Understand that you and your child are free to withdraw from the study at any time, without comment or penalty.
- Understand that you can contact the Research Ethics Unit on [+61 7] 3138 5123 or email ethicscontact@qut.edu.au if you have concerns about the ethical conduct of the project.
- Understand the project will include hand written observations of educators' daily practices.
- Understand the early childhood service, educators, and children will not be identified in any reporting of the research findings.
- Understand that the information collected will be used only for educational and research purposes.
- Agree for your child to participate in the project.

Parent/Guardian name

Signature

Date

Name of child

If you do not provide consent for your child to participate, we will not observe your child during our visit to the room.

Statement of consent for children

Your parent or guardian has said that it is OK for you to be involved in this research project. By drawing or colouring on a face below you are showing that the project has been discussed with you and you are happy to be part of the project.



Please return this sheet to the investigator.



**Inclusion of children with diverse needs in early childhood education and care (ECEC) services:
Exploring inclusive practice through self-authorship**

QUT Ethics Approval Number 1400000897

RESEARCH TEAM CONTACTS

Troy Dunn
0439 728 737
tw.dunn@hdr.qut.edu.au

Sue Walker
07 3138 3195
sue.walker@qut.edu.au

Joanne Lunn
07 3138 3333
j.lunn@qut.edu.au

Faculty of Education, Queensland University of Technology (QUT)

Your participation in this project is voluntary.

If you wish to withdraw from participating in this research project please complete and return this form to a member of the research team.

I hereby wish to WITHDRAW my consent to participate in the research project named above.

I understand that this withdrawal WILL NOT jeopardise my relationship with QUT or with the early childhood centre.

Name

Signature

Date

Appendix B: Data Collection Tools

Scenario Interview		
Rationale		Questions
Introduction	Introduction questions allow for an understanding of participants' ECEC role, experiences with the inclusion of children with diverse needs, and their qualifications	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Can you describe your current role? 2. How long have you been in this role? 3. What ECEC experiences have you had prior to this role? 4. How do you believe your prior ECEC experiences have prepared you to work with children with diverse needs? 5. What ECEC qualifications do you hold? 6. How do you believe your ECEC qualifications have prepared you to work with children with diverse needs?
ECEC Inclusion	Questions about ECEC inclusion aim to explore participants' beliefs about the inclusion of children with diverse needs and their daily practices.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. What does ECEC inclusion mean to you? 8. What teaching practices do you use to help children and others develop respect for diversity? 9. How do ECEC policies shape your teaching practices when supporting the inclusion of children with diverse needs? 10. While I was observing your daily practice I noticed... <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Can you tell me more about this?

<p style="text-align: center;">Self-Authorship</p>	<p>The self-authorship questions are designed to assess the three dimensions of self-authorship: epistemology, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. Participants' description of an important experience with the inclusion of children with diverse needs will also permit for an understanding regarding their meaning making framework, (Baxter Magolda & King, 2012a).</p>	<p>Epistemology (Beliefs about knowing and learning)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Do you think anybody's opinion is as good as another's? Why? Why not? 12. How do you use other people's opinions about the inclusion of children with diverse needs to guide your teaching practice? 13. Do you agree with the idea that there are no right answers in ECEC inclusion of children with diverse needs? <p>Interpersonal (Relationships)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 14. Who has significantly influenced the development of your ECEC identity? How have they influenced your teaching practices with supporting the inclusion of children with diverse needs? <p>Lead in: <i>"Promoting healthy relationships is widely viewed as a crucial practice for ECEC educators supporting the inclusion of children with diverse needs"</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 15. What do you believe are the important skills needed in ECEC to build relationships with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colleagues- Probe: What are the challenges in building relationships with your colleagues? • Parents - Probe: What are the challenges? • Children- Probe: What are the challenges? 16. What do you think are your strengths in working with others – colleagues, parents, and children? <p>Intrapersonal (Identity)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 17. Can you tell me about an important experience that you have had with the inclusion of a child with diverse needs? 18. Why was this experience important to you? 19. What challenges did you encounter? 20. How did it effect you? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your self-identity? • The way you see yourself as an ECEC educator? • Your teaching practices? 21. What support systems or sources of knowledge did you use in this experience? 22. If this knowledge/ people had different opinions to you about what teaching practices you should use when supporting the inclusion of a child with diverse needs, how would you handle these different opinions?
---	---	---

Summary	<p>The summary questions will provide an opportunity for the participants to critically reflect on their experience with the inclusion of children with diverse needs. These reflections will provide an opportunity for the participants to engage in additional meaning making regarding the inclusion of children with diverse needs as they explain what they have learnt from the experience and how these will shape their future pedagogical practice.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 23. What insights have you taken away from supporting the inclusion of child with diverse needs? 24. What issues did this experience of supporting the inclusion of a child with diverse needs raise for you? 25. In what ways will this experience influence you future teaching practice?
----------------	---	---

Stimulated Recall Interviews Based on Observations		
	Rationale	Questions
Observation	<p>Stimulated recall interviews is an approach to help investigate how the participants approach experiences in a number of different situations (Dempsey, 2010), and will allow for insights into how and why they enact teaching practices related to the inclusion of children with diverse needs.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. While I was observing I witnessed you use a teaching practice... could you tell me more about this? 2. Do you remember what you were thinking when using this practice?
Probes	<p><i>Probes will be selected from the examples below to match the observation and explore the various dimensions of self-authorship and meaning making. A mixture of 2-3 probes will be used in each interview to limit the time to 10-15 minutes.</i></p>	

	Meaning making questions aim to explore participants thinking and decision making about the teaching practices used to support the inclusion of children with diverse needs.	3. What did this experience mean to you? 4. What is the purpose of this teaching practice? 5. How did you change or could of change this teaching practice?
	Personal epistemology questions aim to explore participants' views about knowledge and knowing and their reasons for valuing sources of knowledge (Creamer & Laughlin, 2005).	6. What issues did you experience when using this teaching practice? 7. How would you gain more knowledge about such teaching practices? 8. What sources of information would you access/use?
	Interpersonal questions aim to explore participants' communication and collaboration with colleagues, children, and families (Creamer & Laughlin, 2005).	9. Would you seek someone else's opinion about this teaching practice? 10. Would you trust their opinion? Why? 11. How would you use their opinion? What are you thinking/ what is going on inside your head?
	Intrapersonal questions aim to explore how participants deal with competing views using their own personal viewpoints (Creamer & Laughlin, 2005).	12. If someone you trusted had a different opinion about your teaching practices, how would you handle these opposing opinions?

Observation Template	
Case Code:	
Date:	Time:
Observation type: Construction of learning environment <input type="checkbox"/> Program adaption <input type="checkbox"/> Planning and implementation of curriculum <input type="checkbox"/> Intentional teaching <input type="checkbox"/> Interaction <input type="checkbox"/> Resource <input type="checkbox"/>	
Context/Details: <i>(i.e. Who is involved? How is the resource used?)</i>	
How is the educator/resource supporting the inclusion of children with diverse needs? How are inclusive practices being enacted?	
What questions should be asked to interpret this observation?	
Direct Quotes:	